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The Right and the Extreme Right in the Department of the Rhône, 1928 to 1939

Kevin Passmore

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Abstract

This thesis begins with some old questions about the French conservatism. Why has the French right failed to create a united party on the British model? Why have conservatives so regularly turned to authoritarianism? More precisely, how is the emergence the *Croix de Feu* in the 1930s to be accounted for? Was it fascist? Did it pose a threat to the established order? These questions have been addressed by means of a detailed study of the right and the extreme right in one French department, the Rhône.

It is argued that from 1870 until the early 1960s the French right was divided by two fundamental problems: the desirability or otherwise of industrialization and the legacy of the French Revolution, especially the historic quarrel over the place of the Catholic Church in French society. Neither of these issues were primary; what is important is the way in which they were related in the minds of conservatives. In the 1930s these problems became acute. The efforts of conservative governments from 1928 to 1932 to stabilize and modernize the Republic initiated, on the contrary, a process of fragmentation. Instability was exacerbated by the world economic crisis. By 1935 coalition politics had become impossible. Government could be carried on only thanks to the grant of special powers.

This was the context in which the *Croix de Feu* emerged. The league represented a mobilization of the rank and file of the right against leaders who were perceived to have failed in domestic and foreign politics. Hence its combination of radicalism and reaction. It is argued that the *Croix de Feu* (though not its successor, the PSF) was a fascist movement. It is also suggested that in the period which ended with the "fascist riots" of 6 February, 1934, a crisis had been developing out of which a fascist regime might have emerged. But the formation of the Popular Front and its success in manipulating the French Republican tradition, prevented this crisis from developing beyond its early stages. The electoral victory of the Popular Front, the strikes of June 1936 and the dissolution of the leagues put paid to the fascist threat. But the right remained as unstable as ever. So authoritarianism survived in different ways.

In the Rhône this crisis took the form of a breakdown of the liberal tradition which had dominated conservative politics since the 1840s, and which was deeply rooted in the silk industry. In the 1920s this liberal-conservative tradition was concretized in the Chamber of Commerce and the *Fédération républicaine*. From the end of the decade it was undermined from two directions. On the one hand there was a challenge from a coalition of Catholic integrists, merchant-manufacturers and large landowners who were worried by certain aspects of economic and social change. In the early 1930s this group won control of the *Fédération républicaine*. On the other hand there emerged a reformist challenge to the liberal tradition. In the countryside independent peasant proprietors turned to the *Jeunesse agricole chrétienne*. In Lyon the bureaucratization and feminization of white collar work coincided with the formation of a Catholic trades union movement. The diversification of the economy led to the emergence of a challenge from engineering employers. In the late 1920s these groups were sympathetic to the parties of the centre right. During the crisis of the 1930s they turned to the *Croix de Feu* and the PSF.

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Abbreviations

AF	Action Française
ACS	Alliance des chambres syndicales lyonnaises (federation of small business)
AICA	Association industrielle, commerciale et agricole (Lyon branch of CGPF)
ALP	Action libérale populaire
CFTC	Confédération française des travailleurs chrétiens
CGPF	Confédération française de la production française
CSIM	Chambre syndicale des industries métallurgiques du Rhône
FNC	Fédération nationale catholique
JAC	Jeunesse agricole chrétienne
JOC	Jeunesse ouvrier chrétien
JP	Jeunesses patriotes
PDP	Parti démocrate populaire
PPF	Parti populaire français
PSF	Parti social français
SFS	Syndicat des fabricants de soieries de Lyon
SPF	Syndicats professionnels français
TMF	Syndicat des tisseurs mécanique à façon
UCS	Union des chambres syndicales lyonnaise (big business federation)
UF	Union fédérale des commerçants, artisans et petits de la Croix Rousse
UMAC	Union des mutilés et des ancien combattants du Rhône
UNC	Union nationale des combattants
UNSA	Union nationale des syndicats agricoles
USE	Union du Sud-est des syndicats agricoles (conservative agricultural union)
USIC	Union sociale des ingénieurs chrétiens
VN	Volontaires nationaux

Cant.	Commune				
30	1	Affoux	21	62	Coise
33	2	Aigueperse	17	63	Collanges-au-Mont-d'Or
19	3	Albigny	15	64	Condrieu
25	4	Alix	27	65	Corcelles
25	5	Ambérieux	31	66	Cours
24	6	Amplepuis	23	67	Courzieu
15	7	Ampuis	19	68	Couzon-au-Mont-d'Or
30	8	Ancy	23	69	Craponne
25	9	Anse	24	70	Cublize
14	10	Arbresle	19	71	Curis
32	11	Arbuissonnas	17	72	Dardilly
32	13	Arnas	30	73	Dariezé
21	14	Aveize	32	74	Denicé
26	15	Avenas	30	75	Dième
33	16	Azolette	14	76	Dommartin
28	17	Bagnols	27	77	Dracé
26	18	Beaujeu	21	78	Duerne
27	19	Belleville-sur Saône	26	79	Durette
25	20	Belmont	16	80	Echalas
14	21	Bessenay	17	81	Ecully
14	22	Bibost	26	82	Emeringes
32	23	Blacé	14	83	Eveux
28	24	Bois-d'Oingt	26	84	Fleurie
31	25	Bourg-Thizy	19	85	Fleurieu-sur-Saone
20	27	Brignais	14	86	Fleurieux-sur-l'Arbresle
23	28	Brindas	19	87	Fontaines-Saint--Martin
13	29	Bron	19	88	Fontaines-sur-Saone
22	30	Brullioles	23	89	Francheville
22	31	Brussieu	28	90	Frontenas
14	32	Bully	16	91	Givors
19	33	Cailloux-sur-Fontaines	32	92	Gleizé
19	34	Caluire-et-Cuire	29	93	Grandris
33	35	Cenves	23	94	Grézieu-la-Varenne
27	36	Cercié	21	95	Grézieu-le-Marché
29	37	Chambost-Allières	16	96	Grigny
22	38	Chambost-Longessaigne	22	99	Haute-Rivoire
28	39	Chamelet	20	100	Irigny
17	40	Champagne	28	101	Jarnioux
20	43	Chaponost	30	102	Joux
23	44	Charbonnières les Bains	26	103	Juliénas
27	45	Charentay	26	104	Jullié
20	46	Charly	31	41	La Chapelle de Mardore
25	47	Charnay	21	42	La Chapelle sur Coise
16	48	Chassagny	20	142	La Mulatière
17	49	Chasselay	14	250	La-Tour-de-Salvagny
28	50	Chatillon-d'Azergues	31	262	La Ville
18	51	Chaussan	32	105	Lacenas
25	52	Chazay-d'Azergues	25	106	Lachassagne
26	53	Chenas	29	107	Lanure
29	54	Chenelette	27	108	Lancié
28	56	Chessy-les mines	26	109	Lantignié
14	57	Chevinay	21	110	Larajasse
26	58	Chiroubles	28	26	Le Breuil
17	59	Civrieux d'Azergues	32	151	Le Perréon
29	60	Claveisolles	28	111	Légnys
32	61	Cogny	14	112	Lentilly
			26	12	Les Ardillats
			17	55	Les Chères

15	97	Les Haies	14	171	Sain-Bel-les -Mines
22	98	Les Halles	32	172	Salles
30	147	Les Olmes	14	173	Sarcey
30	174	Les Sauvages	14	175	Savigny
28	113	Létra	18	176	Soucieu-en-Jarrest
25	114	Liergues	14	177	Sourcieux-les-Mines
32	115	Limas	22	178	Souzy
17	116	Limonest	16	179	St-Andéol-le-Chateau
17	117	Lissieu	18	180	St-André-la-Cote
15	118	Loire sur Rhone	30	181	St-Appolinaire
15	119	Longes	33	182	St-Bonnet-des-Bruyères
22	120	Longessaigne	29	183	St-Bonnet-le-Troncy
25	121	Lozanne	33	185	St-Christophe
25	122	Lucenay	33	186	St-Clément-de-Vers
26	124	Marchampt	22	187	St-Clément-les-Places
17	125	Marcilly-d'Azergues	30	188	St-Clément-sur-Valsonne
25	126	Marcy	17	191	St-Cyr-au-Mont-d'Or
23	127	Marcy-l'Etoile	32	192	St-Cyr-le-Chatoux
31	128	Mardore	15	193	St-Cyr-sur-Rhone
31	129	Marnand	17	194	St-Didier-au-Mont-d'Or
24	130	Meaux	18	195	St-Didier-sous-Riverie
23	131	Messimy	26	196	St-Didier-sur-Beaujeu
21	132	Meys	27	197	St-Etienne-des-Ouillières
16	133	Millery	27	198	St-Etienne-la-Varenne
28	134	Moiré	13	199	St-Fons
33	135	Moncols	30	200	St-Forgeux
16	136	Montagny	22	203	St-Genis-l'Argentière
32	137	Montmelas-Saint-Sorlin	20	204	St-Genis-Laval
22	138	Montromant	23	205	St-Genis-les-Ollières
22	139	Montrottier	27	206	St-Georges-de-Reneins
25	140	Morancé	19	207	St-Germain-au-Mont-d'Or
18	141	Mornant	14	208	St-Germain-sur-l'Arbresle
19	143	Neuville-sur-Saône	33	209	St-Igny-de-Vers
14	144	Nuelles	33	210	St-Jacques-des-Arrêts
27	145	Odenas	27	211	St-Jean-d'Ardières
28	146	Oingt	16	213	St-Jean-de-Touslas
18	148	Orliénas	25	212	St-Jean-des-Vignes
20	149	Oullins	31	214	St-Jean-la-Bussière
33	150	Ouroux	32	215	St-Julien
20	152	Pierre-Bénite	14	216	St-Julien-sur-Bibost
19	153	Poleymieux	28	217	St-Just-d'Avray
23	154	Pollionay	27	218	St-Lager
21	155	Pomeys	18	219	St-Laurent-d'Agnay
25	156	Pommiers	28	222	St-Laurent-d'Oingt
31	158	Pont-Trambouze	22	220	St-Laurent-de-Chamousset
30	157	Pontcharra-sur-Turdine	23	221	St-Laurent-de-Vaux
25	159	Pouilly-le-Monial	30	223	St-Loup
29	160	Poule	33	224	St-Mamert
33	161	Propières	30	225	St-Marcel-l'Eclairé
26	162	Quincié	16	226	St-Martin-de-Cornas
19	163	Quincieux	21	227	St-Martin-en-Haut
29	164	Ranchal	18	228	St-Maurice-sur-Dargoire
26	165	Regnié	29	229	St-Nizier-d'Azergues
18	166	Riverie	14	231	St-Pierre-la-Palud
32	167	Rivolet	17	232	St-Rambert-l'île-Barbe
19	168	Rochetaillé	19	233	St-Romain-au-Mont-d'Or
24	169	Ronno	30	234	St-Romain-de-Popcy
18	170	Rontolon	15	235	St-Romain-en-Gal

16	236	St-Romain-en-Gier
18	237	St-Sorlin
21	238	St-Symphorien-sur-Coise
28	239	St-Vérand
24	240	St-Vincent-de-Reins
18	184	Ste-Catherine-sous-Riverie
15	189	Ste-Colombe
23	190	Ste-Consorce
22	201	Ste-Foy-l'Argentière
20	202	Ste-Foy-les-Lyon
28	230	Ste-Paule
18	241	Taluyers
27	242	Taponas
30	243	Tarare
23	244	Tassin-la-Demi-Lune
28	245	Ternand
28	246	Theizé
29	247	Thel
31	248	Thizy
23	249	Thurins
33	251	Trades
15	252	Trèves
15	253	Tupin-et-Semons
30	254	Valsonne
23	255	Vaugneray
13	256	Vaulx-en-Velin
32	257	Vaux-en-Beaujolais
26	258	Vauxrenard
13	259	Venissieux
20	260	Vernaison
26	261	Vernay
28	265	Ville sur Jarnioux
22	263	Villechenève
32	264	Villefranche
13	266	Villeurbanne
26	267	Villié-Morgon
20	268	Vourles
23	269	Yzeron

The Communes of the Rhone



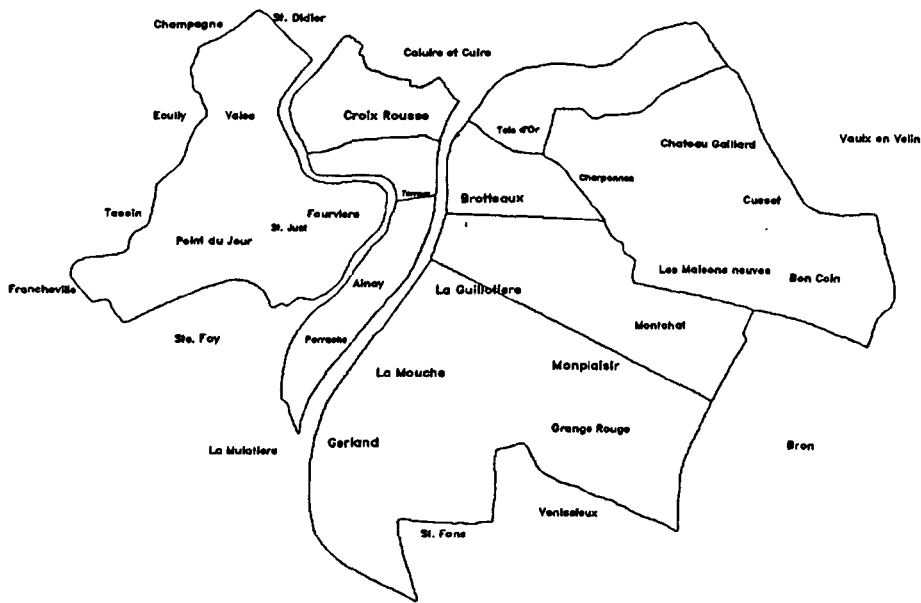
Map 1.1

The Cantons of the Rhone



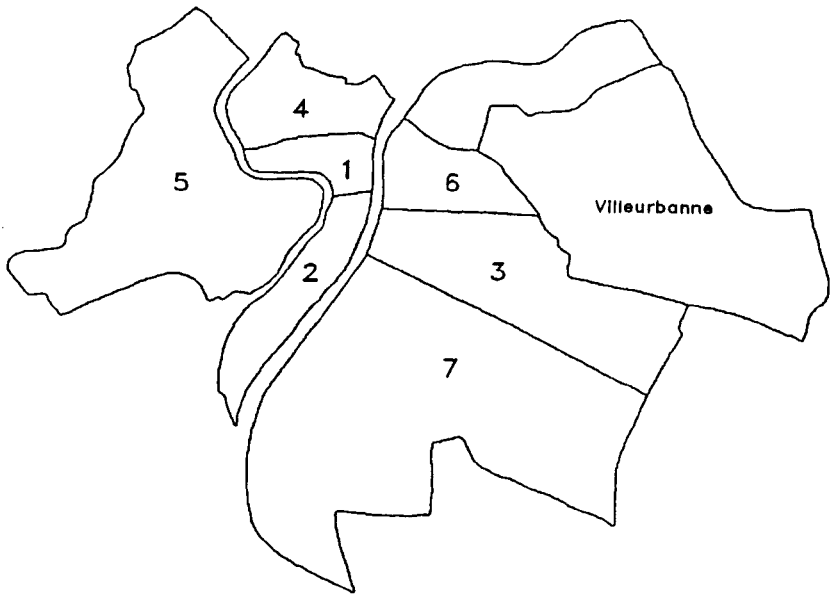
Map 1.2

Lyon and Villeurbanne



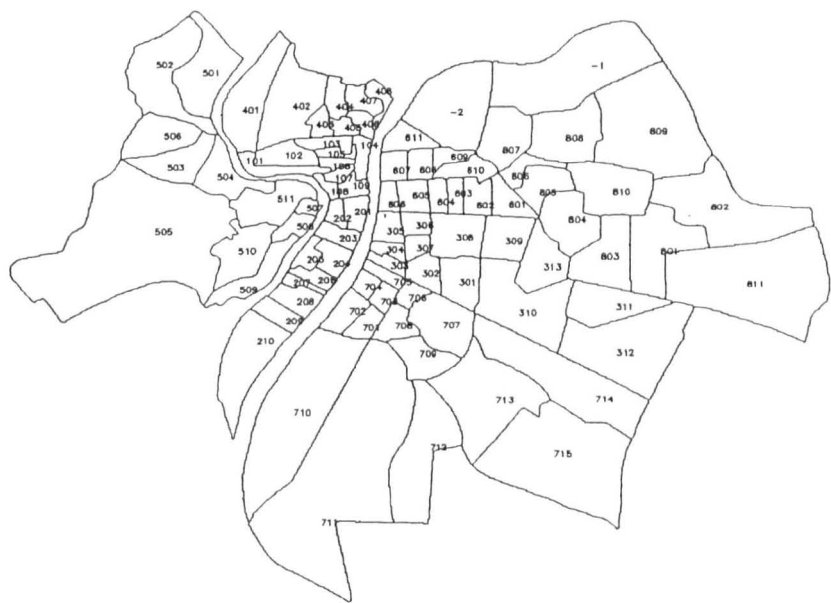
Map 1.3

Lyon and Villeurbanne



Map 1.4

Polling districts, 1928 to 1935



Map 1.5

Polling districts, 1936 to 1938



Map 1.6

The Rhone



Map 1.7

Chapter One

Introduction

At the time of the general elections of April 1928 French conservatives were united behind the elderly ex-President Raymond Poincaré.¹ The fiasco of the *Cartel des gauches* government of 1924 to 1926 had reduced the left to impotence, which in turn caused a decline in the fortunes of the extreme right. The result of the election was to give the right its second and last clear majority under the Third Republic. Once the Radicals had left the government in November 1928 all doubt about the meaning of this triumph was removed. It is not surprising that many believed themselves to be on the threshold of a new era.

Yet 1928 was to prove a false dawn. Successive crises fractured a unity which had in any case been tenuous. First, the efforts of Poincaré and André Tardieu to stabilise their own version of the Republic succeeded only in widening cracks within the right-wing coalition and indeed within the Republic itself. Together with the onset of the world economic crisis these divisions led to the return to power of the *Cartel des gauches* in May 1932.

In the following twenty months the right was united in disgust at the inability of a succession of Radical-led governments to implement a deflationary economic policy. On 6th February 1934, following the implication of several Radical politicians in the Stavisky scandal, various organizations of the extreme right demonstrated on the Place de la Concorde. Fifteen people were killed and 2,000 injured. On the following day the Radical Prime Minister Daladier resigned. His party switched its support to a government of the right under ex-President Gaston Doumergue. Subsequent events, however, showed that the unanimity of the right had been superficial. No more than the Radicals, were right wing governments able to elaborate a coherent economic strategy. Anti-parliamentary leagues such as the *Croix de Feu* profited from the paralysis of government. Meanwhile the left reorganized, and on 14th July 1935 the Radicals joined the SFIO and the Communist Party in the Popular Front.

Even the electoral victory of the Popular Front in April and May 1936 and the mass strikes which greeted the arrival in power of Léon Blum were insufficient to cement conservative unity. On the contrary, the consequence of June 1936 was merely to add to the scrum of competing parties. The *Croix de Feu* became the *Parti social français*, while the renegade communist, Jacques Doriot formed the *Parti populaire français*. Relations between the right and extreme right deteriorated. Neither parliamentary nor extreme right played more than a subordinate role in the defeat of

¹ In order to avoid an unnecessary clumsiness of expression the terms 'right' and 'conservative' will be used to designate both the parliamentary and the extreme right.

the Popular Front. On the eve of war both supported the authoritarian Daladier government. Out of fear of war, and of a working class that had suffered a major defeat, but which was still not eliminated as a factor in the political equation, the right accepted the rule of the 'fusilleur du 6 février'.

This brief summary raises two questions. In the first place, how can the chronic disunity of a right which struggled even to present a united front in the depths of the crisis of June 1936 be explained? It is a banality to state that French conservatives have always looked enviously across the Channel at their British counterparts, able in the twentieth century to lay some claim to being the 'party of Government'.

The second group of questions regards the dramatic re-emergence of the extreme right as a political force in the early 1930s. What were the causes of the growth of the leagues and parties of the extreme right? Were they fascist? Did they pose a significant threat to the established order? Why did the leagues fail to win power? What was the relationship between emergence of the extreme right and the collapse of the parliamentary right?

Understandably, historians have shown less interest in these questions than they have in similar issues in interwar Germany and Italy. Our knowledge of the French right is both less extensive and less sophisticated than is that of its counterparts in the two countries where fascist movements became fascist regimes. Nevertheless, it is essential to begin with a look at certain contrasting overviews of the French right.

Historians and French Conservatism: One or Several Rights?

The obligatory starting point for any historian of conservative politics in France is with René Rémond. Beyond superficial discontinuities, R. Rémond detects three irreducible elements within French conservatism, each 'with its own system of thought, temperament and clientele'. The first is a reactionary and traditionalist strand descended from Ultraroyalism, which passes through Legitimism and survives in Catholic integristism. The second is a liberal and parliamentary tradition originating in the July Monarchy, the modern descendants of which are parliamentary Republicans like Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.² Bonapartism, the third tendency, reconciles democracy and authority in a way which is unique to France. Amongst its capacities is an ability to absorb and neutralize movements of the anti-democratic extreme right. Hence the impossibility of a French fascism of any importance. Examples of Bonapartist movements are the *Croix de Feu*,³ the Gaullist RPF and the *Front national*.⁴ No single idea united the three rights, not even the defence of the status quo.⁵

² R. Rémond, *The Right Wing in France. From 1815 to De Gaulle*. Philadelphia, 1966, p. 279.

³ Rémond op. cit., pp. 279-281. Rémond argues that fascism differs from conservatism in its claim to derive from the will of the people. Yet his definition of Bonapartism also includes an appeal to democracy.

The task of the historian is simply to trace the successive forms taken by each tendency.

These views have been frequently and effectively criticized.⁶ The thesis of continuity of opinions over several generations is vulnerable to the objection that broad regional affiliations to particular doctrines may mask a considerable volatility. Neither does the fixing of the essential characteristics of the right in the first half of the nineteenth century allow room for new responses to new problems.⁷ One can also qualify the contention that there is no single characteristic which unites the right. Certainly this is true in the sense that the notion of the 'right' is an historical concept *par excellence*, in that it has no meaning outside of a particular conjuncture and can therefore radically change its nature from one period to another.⁸ But within periods there is by definition a minimum unity of the right, though this might consist merely in defence of private property, and not extend to agreement on the ways in which it could be protected.

Of René Rémond's three varieties of conservatism, that which is most debatable is Bonapartism. This nonetheless has been among the most influential of his concepts, informing most French writing on the far right.⁹ On close examination Bonapartism turns out to cover a range of rather different movements. In its pure form, represented by Gaullism, Bonapartism means the reconciliation of authority and democracy.¹⁰ There is secondly a left Bonapartism which is socialistic and populist, and which differs from fascism only in its lack of a mass party.¹¹ Finally there is a right Bonapartism of the notables which stresses authority.¹² R. Rémond uses 'populist' and 'democratic' interchangeably, without definition, thereby making it possible to group together radically different movements. Because of this conceptual imprecision it is often difficult to know where Bonapartism ends and fascism or conventional conservatism begins. Individual movements like the *Croix de Feu* are difficult to classify in terms of these definitions. A further problem is that since Bonapartism is in Rémond's view a response to crisis, the question is raised as to where its

4 The potential embarrassment of classing Gaullism and the *Front national* together is avoided by arguing that different movements stress different aspects of the Bonapartist legacy—either authoritarianism or democracy. Gaullism, Rémond's favourite political movement, was alone in achieving a genuine synthesis.

5 R. Rémond, *op. cit.* pp. 29-30.

6 e.g. R. Martelli, 'Peut-on connaître la droite? Approches critiques', CHIMT, 1976, pp. 17-18.

7 For example, the moderate Christian democracy represented by the *Parti démocrate populaire* (PDP), cannot be assimilated into any of R. Rémond's three rights.

8 For an excellent discussion of this problem see J.-Ch. Petitfils, *La droite en France de 1789 à nos jours*, Paris, 1973.

9 P. Milza, *Fascisme français, passé et présent*, Paris, 1987.

10 R. Rémond argues that Gaullism unites democracy and authority, and therefore returns to the essence of Bonapartism. In the same passage it is suggested that the interwar leagues were anti-democratic. But how can the leagues be Bonapartist if they are lacking in one of that tradition's two essential features? Turning back to the earlier discussion of the *Croix de Feu* does not help, for it is admitted that 'we know nothing of the real orientation of this movement'. pp. 278-9, 380-2.

11 Rémond, *op. cit.*, p. 281 and note 13. Yet the *Croix de Feu* were populist, even socialistic, and possessed a mass party.

12 Rémond, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

'distinctive clientele' is to be found, and of how the tradition is transmitted across several generations. Neither is it plausible to see Bonapartism as a distinct ideology. Rather it is part of the pool of ideas on which the European extreme right draws. Even a cursory examination of *Mein Kampf* reveals the influence of the notion of the plebiscited leader.¹³

Perhaps the fundamental flaw in René Rémond's thesis is that although he speaks of groups with specific clienteles, he in practice confines himself almost exclusively to the reconstruction of 'the genealogy of a family of ideas'.¹⁴ Contexts are evoked only as a vague background to which essentially stable ideologies are adapted. The adjustment of the right to mass democracy, for example, is seen merely as a surface phenomenon. And just as the relationship between doctrines and politics is vague, so the question of the articulation of ideology with social formations is left open. It is this which makes possible the establishment of identity between political movements separated by many decades, on the basis of often quite random formal comparisons.

In spite of these reservations René Rémond's stress on traditions is undoubtedly of value. Ways of seeing the world generated at particular historical moments become part of the circumstances governing behaviour in later periods. But traditions cannot be divorced from historical context. Attention must be paid to the way in which they are transmitted, to the changes they undergo through time and to the way in which they overlap with other traditions.

Whatever their faults, Marxist interpretations of the French right are not open to the charge of neglecting historical context. In the nineteenth century, it is argued, the struggle to eliminate the last vestiges of the ancien régime meant that the Republican bourgeoisie could present itself as on the left, and could therefore enlist the support of workers and peasants. But this conflict of old and new elites was increasingly circumscribed by the assimilation of the aristocracy into the capitalist economy and above all by the development of popular struggles. By the 1930s the class struggle had been simplified. The left, led by the Comintern, confronted a bourgeoisie in which international monopoly capital was preponderant. There was still no single party of the right. But this had little significance beyond the fact that a diversity of vocabularies was used to broaden the right's appeal.¹⁵

13 'The folkish state from the township up to the Reich leadership, has no representative body which decides anything by the majority, but only *advisory bodies* which stand at the side of the *elected leader*, receiving their share of work from him, and in turn if necessary assuming unlimited responsibility in certain fields, just as on a larger scale the leader or the chairman or various corporations himself possesses'. A. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 1925, 1926, translated by W. Mannheim, London, 1969, pp. 347-9. The first emphasis is in the text. The second was added by myself. Hitler's constitutional projects were remarkably similar to those of the French leagues.

14 Rémond, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

15 Martelli, *op. cit.*; M. Margairaz, 'La Droite et l'état dans les années trente'. CHIMT 1976. This interpretation has been elaborated largely by Communist Party historians. It has also influenced the American historians S. Elwitt and H. Lebovics, who have been concerned with the emergence of a united anti-socialist conservative party in the 1890s. (S. Elwitt, *The Third Republic Defended: Bourgeois Reform in France, 1880-1914*, London and

Given that the bourgeoisie and its political representatives are seen as a bloc, it follows that it was the whole of the right which turned to fascism in the mid-1930s. Leagues and parties formed part of a functional whole, united around Gaston Doumergue's policy of reform of the state. This was a programme which amounted to a form of fascism. Behind this movement, inevitably, was monopoly capital, manipulating the discontent of the petty bourgeoisie in order to secure its own undisputed control over the state.¹⁶

It will already be clear from the discussion of René Rémond's approach that the refusal to recognize the significance of ideological divisions is a major flaw in this interpretation. Gramsci, a less dogmatic communist, saw that parties which had come into existence at crucial moments in history would not necessarily be able to adapt themselves to new tasks in new epochs, and were always liable to end up 'suspended in mid-air'.¹⁷

A second criticism of the Marxist interpretation is its assumption of unity in the socio-economic domain. It may be true that the right was increasingly preoccupied with the Marxist danger. But beyond this there was often considerable disagreement over how best to meet this threat. Meanwhile socially subordinate conservative groups also attempted to have their say. The 'petty-bourgeoisie' were not simply manipulated by 'monopoly capital'.

Apart from these two approaches to French conservatism it would also be possible to infer a global view from the work of certain other historians. Zeev Sternhell, for example, argues that the fundamental conflict in French society is not between left and right, but between a liberal centre and revolutionaries of extreme left and extreme right.¹⁸ Extremists, it is argued, are brought together by their hostility to a liberal-capitalist status quo. The result of their rapprochement is a synthetic ideology to which the right contributes nationalism and the left socialism—national socialism. This meeting of left and right occurred first during the Boulanger affair. Z. Sternhell goes on to argue that because of the inordinate strength of the political centre in France, fascism as an intellectual movement has been especially strong there. By the end of the 1930s fascist modes of thought had corrupted French society in general.

The provocativeness of Zeev Sternhell's thesis scarcely compensates for the bizarre twists of his argument.¹⁹ He sees proto-fascism everywhere, in figures as diverse as Ernest Renan, the socialist André Philip and the Catholic intellectual

Baton Rouge, 1986; H. Lebovics, *The Alliance of Iron and Wheat in the Third French Republic, 1860-1914: The Origins of the New Conservatism*, Baton Rouge, 1988).

16 Margairaz, op.cit. passim.

17 *Selections From the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith, (ed.), London, 1971, pp. 210-23.

18 Z. Sternhell, *Ni Droite ni Gauche. l'idéologie fasciste en France*, Paris, 1983; *La droite révolutionnaire*. Sternhell was anticipated on many points by J. Plumyène and R. Lasierra, *Les Fascismes Français*, 1923-36, Paris, 1963: for example they conclude, before Sternhell, that the *Cercle Proudhon* was a key moment of pre-fascism, a synthesis of right and left oppositions.

19 For a critique of Z. Sternhell's ideas see Milza, op. cit., chapter 1,

Emmanuel Mounier. Just about the only elements in French society which were untainted by fascism were paramilitary leagues like the *Croix de Feu*.²⁰ The fundamental problem here is that Z. Sternhell concentrates on marginal intellectuals, and moreover removes their ideas from their historical contexts.²¹ Indeed, it is suggested that real fascism is compromised by contact with reality. It is better studied in its pure form in the works of someone like Thierry Maulnier, than in a concrete historical movement like Jacques Doriot's PPF or the Nazi regime.²²

Finally, mention must be made of the work of William Irvine, in which it is argued that the fundamental concern of the right since 1870 has been to adapt its elitist organizational forms to the rise of democracy.²³ Aspects of W. Irvine's thesis can be contested: the primacy accorded to organization; the dismissal of ideological conflicts between the leagues and the parliamentary right,²⁴ and the failure to explore fully the relationship between organization, ideology and sociology. Nevertheless, this is a valuable contribution to the study of the French right. We shall see that organizational questions are fundamental to its history in the Rhône. Finally, W. Irvine's work has the great merit of being based on real research into the *Fédération républicaine* and its relationship with the *Croix de Feu*. As such it represents a major advance over previous work.²⁵

To sum up, this historiographical survey of the French right permits the identification of three problem areas. There is a lack of conceptual rigour. Rémond's three tendencies of the right are as loosely conceived as Sternhell's definition of fascism. The Marxist view is not lacking in precision, but it is achieved by reducing all conservative movements to tools of monopoly capital. Second, there is an exaggerated concern with ideology, although the work of Zeev Sternhell confirms Tim Mason's view that 'what presently passes for intellectual history should not be left to intellectual and political historians'.²⁶ Thirdly, detailed research on the right has been the exception rather than the rule. Next to nothing is known of the *Croix de Feu* and PSF.

Bearing these points in mind, it is now possible to outline the main arguments of this thesis.

20 Z. Sternhell, 'Strands of French Fascism', in B. Hagtvet, S. Ugelvik, J. P. Myklebust (eds.), *Who were the Fascists?*, Oslo, 1980, p. 494.

21 Sternhell, *Ni droite ni gauche*, p. 101. What counts is 'la logique d'une situation et d'un cheminement intellectuel et non pas une conjoncture extérieure qui se trouve à l'origine de cette synthèse nouvelle'.

22 Sternhell, op. cit., pp. 121, 293: 'Le potentiel révolutionnaire des mouvements fascistes, [...] fut ainsi largement neutralisé par les mécanismes du clivage gauche-droite auquel ils ne purent échapper, et qu'ils avaient tout fait pour briser'. This is not too far from Rémond's view that fascism was denatured by the French bourgeoisie, who took from it only anti-Bolshevism, anti-parliamentarianism, and defence of order.

23 W.D. Irvine, *The Boulanger Affair Reconsidered*, Louisiana, 1990; *French Conservatism in Crisis. The Republican Federation of France in the 1930s*, Louisiana, 1979.

24 W. Irvine is agnostic on the question of whether or not the leagues were fascist. But his view is compatible with that of Robert Soucy: that fascism means conservatism by other means. R. Soucy, *French Fascism: The First Wave, 1924—1933*, New Haven and London, 1986.

25 Indeed, most of the empirical work on the French right in the interwar period as been done by 'Anglo-Saxons'. This is interesting given that it is mainly non-French historians who argue for the existence of French fascism.

26 Tim Mason, 'Open Questions on Nazism', in R. Samuel (ed) *People's History and Socialist Theory*, London 1983.

1. The divisions of the right must be understood in relation to a process of negotiation, from which economic, social and ideological power are never absent.²⁷ This can be analysed on three levels. First a struggle to set the tone within the ruling class. Second the efforts of the ruling class to mobilize a popular constituency, and correspondingly the more intermittent attempts of that constituency to give its own meaning to the conservative coalition. Thirdly, there is the relationship of the right to those movements which stand outside it. It must be understood that bargaining is ongoing, so that whilst it might sometimes be fruitful to analyse the way in which the conservative coalition crystallizes around a certain set of policies, such as protectionism, the ideological cement of conservatism must be understood more broadly. At its widest it involves merely an agreed framework for resolving differences, such as republican democracy. It must also be borne in mind that negotiation involves economic, social, political, ideological and organizational questions, none of which, in a given historical context, is reducible to another.

2. It will be argued that there was an economic dimension to conflict within the right. It was related to the lengthy development of industrial capitalism in France and its co-existence with a large petty production sector. French conservatives were unsure whether industrialization was a good thing. They were also uncertain whether their interests lay in forming a united front of property owners against the left, or in attempting to incorporate the working class through social reform or social mobility. In addition the right in the 1930s had to cope with the mobilization of interest groups representing conservative white collar workers, small businessmen, peasants and even workers.

3. This class conflict within the right was complicated by deep cultural cleavages. One of the major reasons for the chronic instability of the French conservatism was that industrialization had occurred at a time society was already profoundly divided by the legacy of the French Revolution and the quarrel over the place of the Catholic Church in society. Economic and social problems were therefore conceived differently by clericals and anti-clericals. This does not mean simply that economic interests are mediated by a cultural superstructure. Rather, in a given historical situation economic and cultural determinants were inseparable. Individuals conceived their economic interests differently because of their religion, and their religion differently because of their economic position. Furthermore, the meaning of Catholicism was contested by different elements within the right.

4. In the late 1920s and early 1930s the long-term crisis of the right became acute. The causes were firstly the efforts of the governments of Poincaré, Tardieu and Laval to stabilize a conservative republic by placing economic interests above 'sterile' ide-

²⁷ These ideas owe much to the use of Gramsci by historians such as Geoff Eley in his *Reshaping the German Right*, London, 1980. Where I differ from him is in eliminating the Althusserian aspects of his interpretation. This involves giving greater emphasis to the inseparability of ideology and material interest.

ological quarrels. They failed partly because of fears of immoderate industrialization and partly because neither Catholic nor lay rights could conceive their economic interests separately from their views of the religious question. The resulting conflict was further complicated by the economic crisis of the 1930s. Its effect was to intensify competition between interests within an already fragmented right, and to paralyse the formulation of policy.

5. Out of this crisis of the right emerged the leagues. They were a response to the breakdown of 'negotiated consent' both within the right and within society as a whole. There was a perceived inability of the established conservative parties to deal with the range of problems which faced them. The leagues represented a mobilization of the rank and file of the right. Their revolt therefore had an 'anti-establishment' tone. It was not reducible to a revolt of the petty bourgeoisie, though it sometimes *included* hostility to economic and social authorities. The function of the leagues was to shift the balance in the reproduction of social power away from negotiation towards authority. Hence the appeal of a strong leader, who would reimpose unity by enforcement of the national interest.

6. It will be argued that the leagues, (with the exception of *Action Française*) were fascist. It will also be suggested that there was a fascist threat in France, but that it did not develop beyond its early stages. The crucial period was 1933 and early 1934, when there were signs of the detachment of the Republican rank and file from the regime. But the reaction of the left, very different from that of its Italian or German counterparts, was responsible for blocking the route to fascism at an early stage.

7. On the eve of war, although the Popular Front had been defeated by an alliance of state and employers' groups, none of the conflicts within the right had been resolved. Indeed, the expansion of the PSF had complicated the problems of the right. Because the left too was by now in a state of advanced disintegration the way was clear for the executive power, in the form of the Daladier government, to assert its independence. Thus the (temporary) outcome of the long crisis of the Third Republic was not a fascist regime, but another variety of authoritarianism—perhaps Bonapartist.

8. By 1940 there were *some* signs that the importance of cultural cleavages within the right were declining. The PSF proclaimed its desire to reconcile clericals and anti-clericals at a time when even the Radicals were reconsidering their attitude to the Lay Laws. The origins of this rapprochement were to be found, paradoxically, in the missionary efforts of Catholic Action. Yet it had its limits. Most of the right agreed, at a minimum, on the social value of the Church. Conservatism was more absolutely identified with Catholicism than it had ever been. But the cost was the import of ideological divisions within the Church into the right. This prepared the way for the emergence after the war of the *Mouvement républicain populaire*.

In the following section the developing crisis of the Third Republic will be analysed in more detail. The main point is to explain why France was vulnerable to authoritarianism. This will help us to understand the crisis of conservative parties in the Rhône.

Conflict and Stability in the Third Republic

It is often argued that the stability of the Third Republic rested on a social and political compromise between capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production. More concretely, this involved an alliance of peasants, artisans and other small producers with the industrial bourgeoisie, from which the working class and what was left of the aristocracy were excluded. In return for support against the socialists, small producers were accorded social and economic protection—hence the slow pace of French industrialization. The argument was originally formulated by Stanley Hoffmann, and in a modified form has been taken over by Marxists such as Sanford Elwitt and Herman Lebovics.²⁸ Their contribution is greater precision on the nature of the underlying economic interests: they argue for an alliance of protectionist heavy industry, textile manufacturers, landowners and peasants.

There is much value in this interpretation. Businessmen were prominent amongst Republican leaders, whilst iron, steel, textiles and agriculture were the main props of the economy. The electoral base of the regime was provided largely by the peasantry and petty bourgeoisie; the history of the Third Republic is incomprehensible if the constraints this imposed are forgotten. On more than one occasion the regime was saved by a conjunction of social and political centres. Nevertheless, this view has certain draw-backs. It obscures the fluid nature of class alliances in the Third Republic, and leads to an exaggerated stress on the equilibrium of the regime. Although dependence upon peasant votes limited the freedom of action of Republicans, there is hardly any evidence of positive action on their part to defend the social and economic position of small producers. Such measures were taken after World War One, but they were part of a crisis of the Republic. Little space is allowed for religious conflict. Thus Herman Lebovics dismisses the Dreyfus Affair as a minor disruption in a pattern of class alliances which lasted until 1936, whilst Sanford Elwitt sees labels like 'clerical' and 'anti-clerical' as useful only for keeping track of ministries. In reality the alliance of capitalists and small producers was never complete; it was always in a state of incipient dissolution, and went through a number of mutations.

²⁸ S. Hoffmann, 'Paradoxes of the French Political Community', in Hoffmann, et al. (eds.), *In Search Of France*, New York, 1963; S. Elwitt, *The Making of the Third Republic: Class and Politics in France, 1868-1884*, Baton Rouge, 1975; Lebovics, op. cit. passim.

The Republican legacy

The capture of the Third Republic by the Republicans in the 1870s and 1880s did involve the establishment of a bourgeois hegemony.²⁹ But significant aspects of Republicanism are obscured if it is not recognized that the Republican bourgeoisie not only acted in accordance with what it took to be its material interest, but also defined itself and its material interests in terms of Republican ideology.

This meant that on the one hand, Republicanism was *less* than the industrial bourgeoisie, for the simple reason that by the 1870s many entrepreneurs, perhaps the majority, were Catholics. This was not necessarily incompatible with anti-clericalism, but in places like the Nord or the Gard many businessmen were royalists. The mine-owner Léonce Chagot at Montceau-les-Mines was notorious for his Catholic royalism.³⁰

On the other hand Republicanism was *more* than the industrial bourgeoisie. It was also based on the small town and rural bourgeoisie. The Republicanism of this group derived from a Revolutionary tradition which had been kept alive by decades of conflict with priests and aristocrats. There was sometimes an economic dimension to this conflict, for landowners and small businessmen might resent clerical injunctions against Sunday working. In other cases economic motivation was less evident. Doctors and priests disputed the management of illness and death; priests and school teachers struggled for control over the young; professional men feared the influence of the clergy over their wives.

It follows from this that we cannot see Republican ideology only in terms of the strategies of an industrial bourgeoisie. Republicans defined themselves as anti-clericals. From this it followed that Catholics were opposed to democracy and progress—an equation which was sometimes, but not necessarily, true. Thus the Republican middle class in a town dominated by a paternalist Catholic businessman might have encouraged resistance to that employer through the setting up of a lay school. Such was the case at Carmaux. Hence also the division of employers along confessional lines in the Nord.³¹ So Republican ideology served as a framework for integrating the bourgeoisie itself. This was achieved at the price of including elements liable to de-stabilize an alliance based on property, and of excluding elements which might have been class allies, and who were seen partly because of their views on the religious question as enemies of order.

The inseparability of religion and economic interest can also be seen in the relationship of the Republicans to their rank and file. Sanford Elwitt argues con-

²⁹ Elwitt, *The Making*, passim. Some of the arguments which follow are derived from Elwitt, although he explicitly adheres to the Hoffmann social protection thesis.

³⁰ R. Locke, *French Legitimists and the politics of Moral Order*, 1974. R. Gibson, *A social History of French Catholicism*, London, 1989, pp. 199-212.

³¹ R. Magraw, *France 1815-1914: The Bourgeois Century*, Oxford, 1983, p. 281.

vincingly that Republicans won small producers over to a policy of industrialization by presenting railways as an opportunity for them to sell their products in a wider market, thereby obscuring the fact that industrialization threatened their elimination. Republican propaganda associated markets with the possibility of social ascension through work, facilitated by Republican education and democracy. But what S. Elwitt fails to see are the consequences of linking such themes to anti-clericalism, for many small producers attributed perceived success to values learned in lay schools. As a result that section of the right which had originated in anti-clerical Republicanism crystallized around defence of status, future prospects and lay values. For such people anti-clericalism and conservatism meant the same thing. On the other hand Republican values could be turned against moderate Republicans as Radicals fastened onto the economic discontent of small producers. The Opportunists were denounced by the Radicals for their lukewarm pursuit of anti-clerical measures, which prevented the emergence of a true society of opportunity.

The situation was further complicated by an often neglected aspect of Republicanism. Certain Republicans were practicing Catholics. Though opposed to the schemes of integrists, they sought to contain anti-clericalism. They regarded religion as a means of moralizing the working class, and so without calling into question lay education they attempted to graft support for Catholic education onto their democratic and liberal Republicanism. Perhaps the best examples of this are the Progressist leaders Eugène Motte in Roubaix, and in Lyon Edouard Aynard.³² They contributed therefore to the formation of a parallel route to social mobility which depended on Catholic rather than lay values. Two white collar workers, one a Catholic, the other an anti-clerical, could therefore conceive their conservatism in different ways. One might attribute status to having obeyed the Church's condemnation of dancing and the cabaret; the other might look to the lay school and to the liberal-republican philosophy of self-help. So however much men like Motte and Aynard spoke of transcending the religious quarrel, their relationship with their rank and file obliged them to take up a position.

To the right of Eugène Motte was an anti-republican right, which with the decline of Royalism defined itself more and more in Catholic terms. Little is known of the reasons for the gradual rallying to republicanism of formerly royalist areas like the west in the 1890s. It is usually assumed—perhaps incorrectly—that docile peasants followed landowners and priests in their choice between *Ralliement* or sullen opposition.³³ But what is certain is that the formerly monarchist right was increasingly

³² See chapter 2.

³³ The process may have been less passive, for it would appear that the royalist electorate turned to Boulangism well before royalist leaders put their weight behind the General. Boulangism might therefore have provided a bridge to the Republic.

confined to areas previously known for their Legitimism, though this is often obscured by the fact that after 1883 royalists were led by an Orleanist Pretender with Bonapartist proclivities. In all of these areas Catholicism was essential to the right. In the Breton countryside conservatism was about defence of peasant communities defined in terms of a popular Catholicism; in Midi towns Catholic royalism fed on centuries of conflicts with Protestants; in the north-east industrialists had traditionally seen the Church as an instrument of social control.

What all of this means is that however much they wanted to do so the various strands of French conservatism were not free to set aside 'sterile quarrels' in order to create an anti-socialist alliance. In the minds of the majority either anti-clericalism or Catholicism were the best means of defence against socialism.

A second founding?

These conclusions throw an interesting light on the view that in the 1890s atavistic squabbles gave way to bourgeois unity against socialism.³⁴ S. Elwitt details a growing consensus among lay Solidarists and Catholic Le Playists that the social question was now the priority in politics. Liberal notions of the dissolution of classes into a society of opportunity gave way to acceptance of the working class as a fact of life.³⁵ H. Lebovics shows how Republican businessmen, Catholic landowners and peasant farmers were drawn together by a common commitment to protectionism, which was designed to raise the income of sellers and remove the causes of working class discontent by reducing unemployment. Imperialism and the *Ralliement* worked to the same end. The result of this 'second founding' of the Republic was to bind small producers to a united capitalist class in an alliance which lasted until 1936.

Undoubtedly there was in the 1890s a realignment in 'social politics' thanks to the rise of socialism, the bankruptcy of royalism and the new direction of the Papacy. There was also a marked shift from the economic optimism of the 1870s to Jules Méline's association of protectionism with defence of the peasantry. There can be no doubt either that both Republicans and Catholics *wanted* an anti-socialist front. Yet the ruling class remained divided. The regime itself continued to be unstable.

Protectionism did not have the central importance it possessed in German or British politics. In other respects Republicans remained more or less true to economic liberalism.³⁶ Apart from tariffs little else was done to defend the interests of small producers.³⁷ This was one reason why the turn of the century saw the emergence of

³⁴ Lebovics, *op. cit.*, *passim*; Elwitt, *The Third republic Defended*, *passim*.

³⁵ He says 'labels like opportunist, liberal or radical, clerical or anticlerical are useful only for keeping track of ministries'.

³⁶ This, no doubt, is why Méline referred to his own ideas as a form of 'libéralisme aménagé'. Protectionism was not coupled to authoritarianism, the threat of a coup d'état and corporatist social experiments in the way that it was in Germany.

³⁷ P. Nord, *Paris Shopkeepers and the Politics of resentment*, Princeton, 1986, shows how small shopkeepers in Paris were alienated from the Republic by its failure to limit the growth of department stores.

the left wing Radical party as a key political force. Neither was there much of an effort to improve the conditions of the working class, either through state action or private initiative. Finally, protectionism does not seem to have led to a lasting rapprochement of Republicans with Catholic landowners. In the 1890s and 1900s the latter were busily founding confessional agricultural syndicates as a means of preserving their influence.³⁸

In reality, what bound the Republicans together was not agreement on protection, but the same broad commitment to liberal democracy and the market economy which had mobilized the preceding generation. This would explain why some of the most prominent Republican leaders, such as Eugène Motte and Edouard Aynard, did not break with Méline, even though they were free traders and opponents of social reform.³⁹

In consequence the same cultural issues continued to divide conservatives. However much certain leaders might have wanted to create a 'new spirit' in Church-state relations, Catholic and Republican values remained inseparable from left-right and intra-right conflicts. The *Ralliement* was disrupted by the unwillingness of rank and file Catholics in the constituencies to accept it, and by the refusal of the Republicans to touch the *lois scolaires*.⁴⁰ Most obviously the Dreyfus Affair put an end to the 'new spirit' and split the Republicans.

Thanks to the Affair the 'fusionism' of the 1890s was followed by an unprecedented fragmentation of bourgeois politics, which moreover had long-lasting effects. Elements of the anti-clerical bourgeoisie were attracted to the left in the form of the Radical party. There they met with the discontent of anti-clerical small producers. The latter criticized the Opportunists for subservience to 'big capital' which was crushing small producers, and blamed the Opportunists for their failure to pursue the war against the capitalists' ally the Church [sic] with sufficient vigour. This shows again how anti-clericalism had escaped the control of Republican elites. The inability of the Radicals to decide whether their interests lay in an anti-clerical and anti-capitalist alliance with the left or in lining up with the right in defence of property, was a major source of instability in the Republic.

Another result of the Affair was to institutionalize a division within the right. On the one hand were the supporters of Raymond Poincaré who rallied to the defence of the Republic and formed the *Alliance démocratique*. On the other hand the mainly Catholic Republican anti-Dreyfusards formed the *Fédération républicaine*. It is surely significant that the cause of this split in the Republicans should be the religious ques-

38 G. Garrier, 'L'Union du sud-est des syndicats agricoles avant 1914', MS, 1969; S. Berger, *Peasants against Politics: Rural Organization in Brittany, 1911-1967*, ch. 1.

39 See also P. Garrigues, 'Léon Say: un libéral sous la Troisième République (1871-1896)' *Revue Historique*, 1991.

40 D. Shapiro, 'The *Ralliement* in the French Politics of the 1890s', in St. Anthony's Papers, 13, 1962.

tion rather than protectionism. Economic questions did not divide Federation and Alliance, but the way in which lay and Catholic values were related to their liberalism did drive them apart. Méline, Motte and Aynard joined *ralliés* and crypto-monarchists in opposition. But although these three factions shared Catholicism, they remained divided by attitude to the regime and by economic questions and even to the Church. None of these rights was ever entirely convinced that the others were genuinely conservative. Even in 1928 Raymond Poincaré of the Alliance regarded the right wing of his majority as 'des hommes du seize mai', that is as subversives.

Another criticism of Herman Lebovics is that the *Ralliement* should not be seen exclusively in terms of the attempts of Catholic elites to join with Republicans in the defence of order. The Church's acceptance of democracy should be placed alongside the endorsement in *Rerum Novarum* of social reform and of trades unions directed by the workers themselves. Together these changes opened the way for the emergence of Christian democracy.⁴¹ The moment was favourable because of the final collapse of royalism in the Boulanger affair and because of the growth of white collar employment associated with the Second Industrial Revolution. In Finistère Christian democracy enabled the clergy to assert their leadership of the peasantry against the wishes of notables and even the hierarchy.⁴² It is therefore possible to see a mobilization of Catholic petty producers on the right in parallel with the disaffection of the Radicals on the left.⁴³ This provides another example of the way in which potential class alliances were disrupted by religion, and shows that Catholicism, like anti-clericalism, was not merely an ideological weapon in the hands of the ruling class. Christian democracy was decidedly on the right, and represented one more attempt to give meaning to conservatism.

One could object that once the Separation crisis was over a new consensus began to emerge in opposition to revolutionary syndicalism.⁴⁴ But rather than see the religious cleavage as secondary, would it not be better to accept that there was a permanent instability in the Third Republic? The fact that even as late as 1910 Eugène Motte's efforts to create an anti-socialist alliance in the Nord were disrupted by a resurgence of anti-clericalism, would seem to confirm this point of view.⁴⁵

One can then agree with Sanford Elwitt that Third Republic represents the triumph of the bourgeoisie, and that this depended in part on the incorporation of small producers. But it must immediately be added that the Republic also represented the

41 The best analysis of this aspect of the *Ralliement* can be found in C. Ponson, *Les catholiques lyonnais et la Chronique sociale*, Lyon, 1979.

42 Berger, *op. cit.*, ch. 1.

43 The similarities between Radicalism and democratic social Catholicism have often been noted. For example, in J-M Mayeur, 'Catholicisme intransigeant, catholicisme social, démocratie chrétienne', *Annales ESC*, 1972, pp. 483-99.

44 R. Watson, 'The Right and the Social Question', in St. Anthony's Papers, 13, 1962.

45 D. Gordon, 'Liberalism and Socialism in the Nord: Eugène Motte and Republican Politics in Roubaix, 1898-1912', *FH*, 1989, pp. 312-43.

triumph of anti-clericalism. For this reason the Republic was permanently unstable. Conservatives were increasingly desirous of an anti-socialist alliance, and from time to time achieved one. But their own self-images prevented them from recognizing potential allies as true conservatives, whilst the methods used to mobilize popular support prevented conservative leaders from ignoring the religious question. Finally, both Catholic and lay varieties of conservatism could be turned against the elites, as the emergence of Christian Democracy and Radicalism demonstrated.

The fragmentation of the right

Fear of revolution prolonged the wartime *Union sacrée* into the *Bloc national*. The *Bloc*, stretching from the royalist *Action française* to the right of the Radical Party, won the general elections of 1919. The coalition partners patched up a compromise on the religious question. During the next two decades financial, economic and social questions were the main focus of domestic politics. With the exception of the Cartel's effort to resume the anti-clerical offensive in 1924, religious questions were apparently secondary.⁴⁶

Yet deeper analysis shows that the regime remained precarious, whilst the right was as divided as ever on the best means of stabilizing it. Consensus was limited to a recognition that the promise of social mobility in a liberal-democratic society was no longer sufficient to contain the left. Disagreements on this issue were related to a debate on the nature and desirability of industrialization, stimulated by the economic expansion of the 1920s. These debates coincided in turn with a change in the institutional structure of the Republic, as a system of interest group representation was grafted onto the parliamentary system. The effect of all this was further fragmentation of political life. This was all the more serious because although the religious question was no longer central to national politics, it remained important in more subtle ways.⁴⁷ Paradoxically, the Church's acceptance of Republican institutions liberated its organizational potential. One new development in the 1920s was that interest groups were formed within Church and lay networks.

During the 1920s the French economy experienced a period of growth that was impressive by both French and European standards. One effect was to accentuate the structural imbalance in the economy.⁴⁸ The development of highly capitalized industries like engineering and electricity contrasted with the weight of small business and the peasantry. Some businessmen in the modern sector were coming to see this

46 H.W. Paul, *The Second Ralliement, the rapprochement between Church and State in France in the Twentieth Century*, Washington, 1967.

47 For the dependence of *Fédération républicaine* leaders de Wendel and the agnostic Louis Marin on the church see Jeanneney, *op.cit.*, pp. 436-9.

48 F. Caron and J. Bouvier, *Histoire économique et social de la France*, p. 647; for a recent restatement of the case for a structural imbalance see Tom Kemp, 'French Economic Performance', in *European History Quarterly*, vol 15, 1985, pp. 474-5.

economic dualism as a handicap to further growth.⁴⁹ Above all such ideas were current in the electricity industry, where they were associated with figures like Auguste Detoef of Alsthom and Ernest Mercier of the CGE. In 1926 Mercier and Detoef set up *Redressement français* to promote what at the time was known as neo-capitalism. This meant in practice concentration, integration, rational use of labour and raw materials, high consumption, disciplined competition by means of ententes, and an end to state protection of small business.⁵⁰

Neo-capitalism was for three reasons of fundamental political significance. Firstly it implied a reformulation of the social basis of the regime. In the past Republican democracy had incorporated a fairly broad alliance of petty bourgeois, peasants and even workers, whilst police and army confronted those workers and peasants who opposed the dominant ideology. Neo-capitalists envisaged concessions to the working class, which would be rewarded for greater productivity by higher wages and social reform.⁵¹ Neo-capitalists could not afford to alienate small producers. Indeed, their interest in using rural electrification recalled that of the early Republicans in railways. But there was no disguising that neo-capitalism implied a fundamental shift in social politics.⁵²

This was all the more true because neo-capitalism emerged partly in reaction to renewed interest after the war in recruiting small producers as allies against the left. Such themes were taken up by the *Bloc national*, and resulted in a system of tax exemptions and cheap credit for artisans. In 1922, with the encouragement of the government, the *Confédération générale de l'artisanat* was formed.⁵³ These were the first measures of any importance which had been explicitly designed to preserve the small production sector.

In spite of the government's efforts to channel and control petty bourgeois discontent it tended in practice to develop a momentum of its own, fuelled by the beginning of a long-term decline in the artisanate and an intensification of the rural exodus. The Radicals were responsive to the demands of their constituency, creating in the mid-1920s official bodies such as the *Chambres des métiers* and *Chambres d'agriculture*. The Radicals also took up the demands of small businessmen that they

49 P. Fridenson, *Histoire des Usines Renault*, vol 1, pp. 133-4. Louis Renault denounced the inefficiency of agriculture and the multiplicity of commercial establishments which creamed off the profits made by the productive sectors.

50 R.F. Kuisel, *Ernest Mercier, French Technocrat*, Los Angeles, 1967; Kuisel, 'Auguste Detoef, Conscience of French Industry', *IRSH* vol 20, 1975; Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France: Renovation and Economic Management in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, 1981

51 Kuisel, *Mercier*, ch. 4; Fridenson, 'L'idéologie des grands constructeurs dans l'entre-deux-guerres', *MS*, 81, 1972, pp. 52-68; S. Schweitzer, *De l'Engrenage à la chaîne. Les Usines Citroën, 1913-1935*, Paris p. 86.

52 The difference was that in the 1920s the Radical Party functioned as a guardian of petty bourgeois interests. This became clear when André Tardieu presented his Mercier-inspired National Retooling scheme to Parliament. It included various rural public works, but failed because it was substantially modified by the Radicals to take account of rural interests.

53 S. Zdzitny, *The Politics of Survival. Artisans in Twentieth Century France*, Oxford, 1990, ch. 1.

be granted the same tax privileges as artisans.⁵⁴ To business, especially the neo-capitalists, it appeared that the pivotal parliamentary position of the Radicals gave petty producers an undue influence on state policy. There was always therefore an anti-parliamentarian sub-current in neo-capitalism.

Secondly, *Redressement français* reinforced historical cleavages in the right. In spite of his anti-parliamentarianism, Mercier tended in the 1920s to work with a favourable group of politicians in the lay centre right. The reason is partly that the centre right was more open to social reform. But French politics are too complicated for this to be the sole reason: sections of the centre right were more conservative on such matters than the social Catholic wing of the *Fédération républicaine*. Once again ideology and history cannot be separated from economic interest. Pierre Lanthier has shown that bosses in the electricity industry derived their power not simply from ownership of capital but from technical expertise, often learned in the *Ecole polytechnique*.⁵⁵ It could be argued that this outlook predisposed them to accept the Republican right's notion of the career open to talent. Mercier, as a Protestant, and married to a niece of Captain Dreyfus, was almost by necessity on the advanced wing of the ruling class.⁵⁶

The origins and outlook of figures like Mercier separated them from that part of the *grand patronat* which owed its power to inherited wealth. This explains a double hostility to the Catholic *Fédération républicaine* and to established employers' organizations. The former included a considerable number of bosses of insurance companies, mining, heavy metallurgical and textile concerns.⁵⁷ These were older industries with an historical connection to Catholic royalism. Textile manufacturers in the Lyonnais and the Nord had seen the monarchy as a defence against the proletarian masses who lived in close proximity to them. The other sectors had grown directly out of aristocratic activities, enabling them to overcome their antipathy to trade.⁵⁸ These, moreover, were industries with relatively high labour costs, or in the case of the textile industry, a difficult market position, factors which made them suspicious of social reform. So economics, religion and history combined to oppose the Federation to *Redressement*.

The same kinds of employers also dominated the peak employers' association, the CGPF, which was ultimately in the hands of the steel makers of the *Comité des*

⁵⁴ The question here was how artisans should be defined: small business demanded the right to employ up to ten workers, a view which horrified big business as much as genuine artisans.

⁵⁵ P. Lanthier, 'Les dirigeants des grandes entreprises électriques en France, 1911 - 1973', in M. Lévy-Leboyer, (ed.), *Le Patronat de la seconde industrialisation*, Paris, 1979.

⁵⁶ Similarly, the fact that Louis Renault denounced cartels in the older sectors of the economy such as glass, leather and steel for raising the prices of his raw materials does not simply reflect material interest, but also Renault's sense that he owed his own success to hard work and self-reliance, not to inheritance (Fridenson, op. cit., pp. 152-4).

⁵⁷ Irvine, op.cit., pp. 19-21.

⁵⁸ D Higgs, *Nobles in Nineteenth Century France*, Baltimore and London, 1987, chapter 4.

forges.⁵⁹ The historical dimension emerges from the case of François de Wendel, a leading member of both the latter organization and the *Fédération républicaine*. De Wendel was the offspring of an aristocratic Legitimist family which had been exploiting iron ore deposits on its estates since the eighteenth century.⁶⁰ It should be stressed that the heavy industry-textile axis was by no means uniquely of Catholic-conservative opinion. Leaders of business organizations were often selected from the more liberal wing of heavy industry. Largely this was a question of the route to state power, which for business passed through the deputies of the centre right, with their quasi-monopoly on the Ministry of Commerce.⁶¹ Nevertheless, neither the CGPF nor the *Comité des forges* were enamoured of *Redressement français* or its ideas.

Finally, neo-capitalism has to be seen as part of a remaking of French institutions. Formation of *Redressement français* was part of a wave of corporate organization. It included the CGPF (1919), Chambers of Agriculture (1925), the *Jeunesse agricole chrétienne* (1929), the CFTC (1919), and the *Union des syndicats d'ingénieurs Français* (1919), to name but a few. The interwar years were also the heyday of non-economic pressure groups like the veterans' associations and the *Fédération nationale catholique*. Interest group politics contributed to political instability. One thing united all of these bodies: they aimed to influence government policy in mutually contradictory ways.⁶² In the 1920s economic prosperity limited conflict. But when during the slump their room for manoeuvre was reduced, many saw the government as having been captured by rival interest groups, and therefore demanded restoration of state authority.

What is more, many of these groups crystallized within existing Catholic and lay networks. The specialist Catholic Action groups are one example. Stephen Zdatny has shown how the artisan movement was disrupted by conflict between a Catholic wing centred on Alsace, and a pro-CGT majority.⁶³ Examples could be multiplied endlessly. The background to this was the Church's acceptance of Republican institutions in the early 1920s.⁶⁴ This coincided with a fundamental change in the strategies of the hierarchy. During the crises of the previous century the Church had clung to the myth of a fundamentally Catholic population. This meant that all the Church had to do to defend its interests was to eliminate the pernicious influence of Freemasons,

59 I. Kolboom, *La revanche des patrons. Le patronat français face au Front populaire*, Paris, 1986 pp. 76. 96; H.W. Ehrmann, *Organized Business in France*, Princeton, 1957, pp. 16-29.

60 J.-N. Jeanneney, *de Wendel*, p. 445.

61 This applies to men such as René Duchemin of the CGPF, Lambert-Ribot of the *Comité des forges* and Henri de Peyerhimhoff of the *Comité des Houillères*. Organised business also tended to concentrate financial support on the politically crucial centre right (Jeanneney, *de Wendel*, p. 445). On the division of ministerial responsibility see D. Taratowsky, 'Le Radicalisme et Réformisme Politique dans la France de l'Entre-deux-guerres', CHIRM vol. 35 No. 1 1980.

62 Note, however, that business groups were better organised and more disciplined. They therefore tended to demand devolution of state power to themselves, whereas organizations of peasants or artisans preferred the state itself to enforce measures such as minimum prices.

63 Zdatny, *op.cit.*, *passim*.

64 Paul, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

Jews and Protestants. After the war the hierarchy recognized that Catholicism was one opinion among many. The Church would therefore have to fight for its interests through bodies like the FNC. And if France was ever to be re-Christianized then a missionary effort would be necessary. Hence the development of specialist Catholic Action groups. The effect of all this was to make the Catholic right *more* dependent upon the Church precisely because the Church had ceased (more or less) to contest the regime.

Neo-capitalism then was one aspect of a crisis in the relations of bourgeoisie with the petty bourgeoisie and the working class; it fractured the unity of the business class, reinforced historic cleavages in the right, and was part of an intensifying process of interest group competition. By the mid-1920s it was clear that Republican institutions were not functioning well. This was confirmed by the disproportionately hysterical reaction of the right to the arrival in power of the Cartel in 1924, the impotence of Cartel governments themselves and the fact that the crisis was resolved only by the granting of special powers to Poincaré. The main purpose of the rest of this thesis is to examine the efforts of the right in one French department to manage and resolve this crisis.

From France to the Rhône

The following chapter describes the emergence of a liberal-democratic and Catholic conservative tradition at the turn of the century in the Rhône. Chapters three and four are concerned with rural and urban social structures and interest group politics. They show how the Catholic liberal consensus on the right was undermined by the new social and political strategies of the Church, the emergence of an independent peasant movement and the CFTC, the relative decline of the silk industry, and the rise of an engineering industry in which many employers were reformist and committed to modernization. The sociology of the electorate and party members of the parliamentary right before June 1936 will be analysed in Chapter five. The links of these same parties to the Church will be examined in chapter six. Chapter seven discusses the impact of the reforms of André Tardieu, inspired by neo-capitalism, on both the right and associated interest groups. It is shown that the reforms caused a reaction on the part of certain Catholics, land owners and silk manufacturers, mobilized by the *Fédération républicaine*. It is shown that the right in the Rhône was already in crisis before the slump. Chapter eight demonstrates the growth of authoritarianism and corporatism in agricultural and industrial circles during the recession, and shows radicalization of the Parliamentary right. In chapter nine the nature of the extreme right before June 1936, especially the *Croix de Feu*, will be analysed. It is argued that the *Croix de Feu* gathered together many of those who had been opposed to the liberal-conservative establishment in the Rhône. The three final chapters are concerned with

the response of the right to the crisis of June 1936 and the nature of the PSF. The central problem is to explain why the success of the patronal counter-offensive against the Popular Front contrasted with an unprecedented degree of factionalism on the right.

The drawbacks of a departmentalized history of France are well-known.⁶⁵ The Rhône is certainly unique; generalization from a single case is always hazardous. But the department is sufficiently populous and its politicians influential enough in national politics for the example to have considerable importance in its own right. Furthermore, its social structures and landscapes are varied enough for it to serve as a microcosm of the nation. In order to orientate the reader it is necessary to provide a brief introduction to the department.

Although the smallest department outside the Paris region the Rhône had in the 1930s a population of about 900,000.⁶⁶ About 70% lived in the agglomeration of Lyon, while 12% resided in smaller towns such as Villefranche, Tarare, and Givors. The rest lived in communes with populations of less than 2,000.

For administrative purposes the department was divided into two arrondissements: Villefranche in the north and Lyon to the south (see Maps 1.1 and 1.2).⁶⁷ These arrondissements were subdivided into thirty-three cantons, twelve of which were within the commune of Lyon. Cantons will frequently be used as a unit of analysis in this thesis, but in the 1930s their sole use was as constituencies for local elections. Below this level were 269 communes. The commune of Lyon was split into seven municipal arrondissements (see Maps 1.3 to 1.6).⁶⁸ Whereas in the case of Marseille urbanization had been accompanied by the absorption of suburban communes, those surrounding Lyon remained autonomous. In addition, advantage has been taken in this thesis of the division of Lyon and Villeurbanne into polling districts, which permit a fine level of analysis.

As for social structures, only the briefest of guides is necessary at this stage. The commune of Lyon is divided into three by the Rhône and Saône rivers. The oldest part of the city—the Fifth Arrondissement—lies on the right bank of the Saône with the narrow streets of Vieux Lyon at the foot of the cliffs. Vaise, to the north, is industrial, while the south is bourgeois or petty bourgeois.

Between the two rivers lies the old heart of the city. The apartments of the nobility and the rentier class were traditionally located between Bellecour and Ainay (districts 204-208), where a number of religious institutions such as the Catholic

65 J. Rougerie, 'Faut-il départementaliser l'histoire de la France?', *Annales ESC*, janvier-février, 1966.

66 The exact population cannot be known because from 1900 until 1936 census returns for the commune of Lyon were deliberately and systematically falsified. J. Bienfait, 'La population de Lyon à travers d'un quart de siècle de recensements douteux, (1911-1936)', *Revue de géographie de Lyon*, 1968, 1-2, article 1: pp. 63-94; article 2: pp. 95-132.

67 For the history of the administrative boundaries of the Rhône see M. Gardin et. al., *Paroisses et communes de France: Le Rhône*, Paris, 1978.

68 Some of these were divided into two cantons, again for the purpose of local elections.

University are also found. The commercial classes lived further to the north. Still further north is the historic centre of the silk industry, the Croix Rousse, where in the interwar years white collar workers had taken over from weavers.

The left bank of the Rhône was only gradually made safe from flooding in the course of the nineteenth century. The bourgeois residences of the Brotteaux contrast with industrial La Guillotière. Expansion of the commune of Villeurbanne also dates from the second half of the nineteenth century. Its population grew from 9,000 in 1876 to 56,000 in 1936.

The 1920s witnessed the explosive growth of a belt of industrial communes stretching from Vaulx en Velin in the east to Oullins in the South West. The population of Vénissieux, for example, rose from 8,000 to 16,000 between 1921 and 1931. By this time only 9% of the adult male population had been born in the commune, while no less than 44% were of foreign extraction.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, new residential zones appeared to the west. In communes such as Ecully, Tassin la Demi-Lune and St. Cyr, peasant farms and the summer residences of the Lyonnais elites were swamped by commuter bungalows

The rural part of the department can be thought of as comprising three natural regions. A fourth can be added if the mountains are divided, though the Monts du Beaujolais and the Monts du Lyonnais are set off from each other less by physical geography than by the omnipresence of industry in the former. The Monts du Beaujolais form a continuous line of peaks from the Col des Sauvages to Mont Rigaud in the north.⁷⁰ Three river valleys, the Trambouze, the Rhins and the Azergues, drain them from north to south. The Monts du Lyonnais are cut into two massifs by the Brévenne river. In general the mountains are inhospitable. Soils are too acid in all but a few areas to be worked normally. Long cold winters, hot summers and unpredictable rainfall ensure that only potatoes and rye can be cultivated with any success. Forest often covers the slopes and crests of the mountains. There are few exceptions to this bleak picture. The relatively broad valleys of the Azergues and the Turdine are more suited to agriculture than the gorge-like Brévenne. South of the Brévenne, in the interior of the mountains, gently rolling hills also provide a less difficult environment.⁷¹ Livestock farming progressed in those areas in the interwar period. Both mountain ranges were areas of dispersed peasant farmers, many of them tenants, and all but a few of them Catholic.

The Beaujolais also consists in reality of two natural regions. Close to the river is the flood plain of the Saône, where the land is suitable for polyculture, particularly grain and stock raising. The Beaujolais proper is relatively featureless in its

⁶⁹ P. Videlier, 'Images d'un banlieu ordinaire dans l'entre deux guerres', unpublished paper.

⁷⁰ Geographical descriptions from G. Garrier, *Paysans du Lyonnais et du Beaujolais*, Grenoble, 1973, pp. 15-38.

⁷¹ These *haut pays* are to be found in the canton of St Symphorian, between the eastern slopes of the mountains and the Coise river basin to the west.

southern part, and is more hilly to the north. The first hills bordering the Monts du Beaujolais are the domain of the vine. The best quality wines are produced on the better soils of the north.⁷² The climate also favours the vine, though late frosts and hailstorms are always possible.⁷³ This was an area of small independent producers, aristocratic and bourgeois landowners and sharecroppers. The only town of any importance is industrial Villefranche.

Finally, the Lyonnaise plateau stretches from the Azergues in the north to the Gier in the south. In the west it is bounded by the Monts du Lyonnais and in the east the cliffs of the left bank of the Rhône-Saône valley provide precisely defined limits. As its name suggests, the macro-relief of the plateau is raised and fairly flat. But its surface is dissected by a host of streams running in deep wooded valleys. Mechanization is consequently difficult. As late as 1949 sledges were often used instead of carts.⁷⁴ Soils are poor, and frosts and droughts are always a possibility. But the proximity of a large urban market compensated for the poverty of natural conditions, enabling peasants to produce vegetables and above all fruit on a commercial scale. Almost all of the land was farmed by small and medium peasant proprietors; large property was rare. The eastern border of the Plateau shades into the residential suburbs of the Lyonnais *banlieu*.

⁷² The famous names are Brouilly, Chénas, Juliéas, Morgon and Fleurie.

⁷³ The Rhône is the department most vulnerable to this form of meteorological disaster. Wine producing communes usually possessed a *syndicat de tir*, which sought to disperse storms by the firing of cannon shots from hill-tops. Results were mediocre until in 1936 Colonel Ruby coordinated a major campaign involving the use of spotter planes to track enemy clouds.

⁷⁴ P. Guiot, *Thurins: démographie d'une commune rurale de l'ouest lyonnais*, Paris, 1949.

Chapter Two

The Orleanist Tradition

Enfin à droite, le plus bête de tous: le conservateur libéral. Celui-là son grand-père était royaliste sous Louis-Philippe, devenue quelque peu républicain en '48, le digne ancêtre se mit à fréquenter les Tuileries après le 2 Décembre. Son père, député royaliste à l'Assemblée nationale, fut un des fondateurs de la République. Lui suivit les diverses fortunes de notre aimable régime. C'est un bon bourgeois, qui tient à ses digestions, il est et sera toujours du côté du manche. Mais il a sa coquetterie, il est à l'aile droite du parti au pouvoir; c'est l'être le plus dangereux, le fourrier de toutes les catastrophes.¹

Admiral Schwerrer's account of the history of the *bien-pensant* right must have struck a chord in the Rhône. Willingness to live with the party in power as long as material interests were protected from a working class prone to insurrection was indeed a constant of conservatism in that department. It is also true that opposition to social reform in the name of an integral liberalism placed Lyonnais conservatives on the right of the regime under the July Monarchy and throughout the Third Republic.

This combination of inflexibility on essential interests with political adaptability could be interpreted as supporting opposed views of the right wing in France. Following René Rémond, Lyonnais conservatism could be seen as an example of the durability of the Orleanist business tradition, with its hostility to constraints on economic progress, whether associated with a vestigial *ancien régime* or with socialism. Or it could support a Marxist thesis of a precocious regrouping of the right against a threat from the working class. A more detailed survey, however, shows neither view to be entirely adequate. On the one hand the Orleanist tradition was fundamentally altered by its encounter with Third Republican democracy. On the other, although all strands in the Lyonnais right were anti-socialist, it was riven with contradictions and needed constant management.

The Making of the Lyonnais Right: Commerce and Class Struggle

Before 1870 the politics of the Lyonnais right had been relatively simple. A cohesive ruling class dominated by silk merchants confronted a socialist proletariat of small master weavers.² For A. J. Tudesq the nobility in Lyon in the first half of the century was indistinguishable from the upper bourgeoisie. It was recently ennobled, without a military tradition, and many were involved in business. Legitimism, such as it was, was characterized by a *de facto* rallying to the regime, encouraged by the traumatic experience of the risings of the *canuts* of 1831 and 1834.³ Rapprochement with Orleanism was also facilitated by the attractiveness of Catholicism to Orleanists

¹ Admiral Schwerrer at a meeting of *Action française* in the Croix Rousse, reported in *La République lyonnaise*, 29-2-1931

² For a brief survey of politics in Lyon during the nineteenth century see A. Latreille (ed.), *Histoire de Lyon et du lyonnais*, Lyon, 1956.

³ A. J. Tudesq, *Les Grands Notables en France, (1840-1849)*, Paris, 1964, pp. 166-8, 284-91. He argues that the ruling class of Lyon resembled a modern capitalist bourgeoisie more than notables with uncontested power.

as a means of social stabilization. Liberalism was the dominant creed of the elites. During the Revolution they had favoured the *Feuillants* and the Girondins. They elected liberals under the Restoration, and saw the July Monarchy as the incarnation of their ideals. Support for the Second Empire was a matter of pragmatism not conviction.

Whilst the thrust of Tudesq's argument cannot be contested, it must be remembered that a few aristocrats, such as the Marquis de Mortemarte in the Beaujolais, possessed an independent source of power in the ownership of land. Their hostility to the July Monarchy had been uncompromising.⁴ Under the Second Republic Legitimists were temporarily given real leverage by universal suffrage. Whereas Orleanists were isolated from the urban proletariat, Legitimists could count on the support of the peasantry.⁵ Where the influence of the Church was strong, there was also some sympathy for Legitimism in Lyon itself. The existence of this minority strand was to prove important to the remaking of the right under the 1930s.

Moral Order to the Great War: dissolution and remaking

The elections of 1871 saw the triumph of a 'peace list' extending from the very moderate Republican Jules Favre to Legitimists such as the Marquis d'Albon.⁶ But soon the isolation of the right became apparent. Republicans provided the whole of the departmental delegation to the Chamber of Deputies from 1876, were unopposed in the municipal council of Lyon from 1877, and won all of the department's Senate seats from 1883.

An intransigent Orleanism controlled the *Comité de l'union conservatrice*.⁷ Its candidates in the general election of 1885 included four Orleanists (of whom three were important businessmen), two Legitimists, (including the landowner the Comte de Jerphanion), two extremely moderate Republicans, and two Bonapartists. The result was a relatively respectable score of 19%, but the inability of royalism to break the political power of the Republicans, who again won every seat in the department, was plain.⁸

The popular classes of Lyon and the smaller towns had always preferred the leadership of socialists and middle class Republicans to that of the elites. What was new was the defection of the peasantry.⁹ In the 1870s peasants were won over to the

4 M. Stewart-McDougall, *The Artisan Republic. Revolution, Reaction and Resistance in Lyon, 1848-1851*, Montreal, 1984, pp. 23-4: in a by election of January 1848 the Marquis de Mortemarte, a Beaujolais landowner, won on the third ballot after making an alliance with reformers.

5 Stewart-McDougall, op. cit., pp. 72-3, 113, 139.

6 A. Latreille, 'Lyon sous le régime républicain', in A. Kleinclausz (et al.), *Histoire de Lyon*, Vol 3, De 1815 à 1940, Lyon, 1952; P. Gric, pseudonym of G. Rieussec, *Les Courants Politiques du Rhône, Types et Silhouettes*, Lyon 1934; L. Bonneval, *Histoire politique du conseil général du Rhône, 1790-1940*, Lyon, 1946.

7 Known as the 'comité de l'archevêché'.

8 F. Delpéch, 'La presse et les partis à Lyon de l'avènement des républicains à l'esprit nouveaux', *Cahiers d'histoire*, vol. 16, 1971.

9 Already during the Second Republic there had been signs that the loyalty of rural society to large landowners could not be taken for granted. In the elections of May 1849, thanks to the propaganda of the démoc-socs, only six

moderate Republic by bourgeois notables who promised political stability and railways. Gilbert Garrier attributes this to the prosperity of the Empire, which permitted the liberation of peasants from the tutelage of landowners.¹⁰ Whatever the cause, the monarchical right had been almost entirely cut off from the masses. Only the isolated and devout peasantry of the west continued to follow the lead of royalist landowners.¹¹

The impasse in which Royalism found itself produced several kinds of reaction, ranging from *ralliement* through retreat into an integrist counter-society to flirtation with a new plebeian right. Historians have generally concentrated their attention upon the radical right. But of greater long-term importance was the formation of a parliamentary right, the result of a coming together of extremely moderate Republicans with Orleanist *ralliées*. The causes were part political and part socio-economic.

Edouard Aynard had collaborated with Republican opponents of the Empire since 1868.¹² This follower of Thiers had been educated by the Dominicans of Oullins, amongst whom the democratic tradition of Lacordaire persisted, and in England where he studied the classical economists. He was distrusted by Republicans for his Catholicism, and by his own milieu for his Republicanism and supposedly lukewarm attitude to defence of religion.¹³ But an opportunity came with disorientation that resulted from the Boulanger debacle. Orleanists in the Rhône had been tempted by the General. One of their number, the forgermaster Edouard Prénat, had even been elected as revisionist deputy for Givors.¹⁴ Nonetheless, Boulangism was a disappointment, and so many Orleanists were pre-disposed to accept the *Ralliement*.¹⁵

Aynard himself had already been elected to represent l'Arbresle in 1889,¹⁶ a seat he held until his death in 1913. Another moderate was elected in Tarare in 1893,¹⁷ In 1898, with the victory of the *rallié* Gourd in the second arrondissement, home of monarchism, came the first success in Lyon. Thus the *modérés* profited from a shift to the right of urban and rural electors even before the Dreyfus affair, which precipitated the break-up of the Opportunist majorities on the municipal council of

rural cantons, all situated in backward mountain areas, failed to give majorities to the red list. In the Plateau commune of Craonne there was an armed mobilization against the coup of Louis-Napoleon. McDougall, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-13; T.W. Margadant, *French Peasants in Revolt. The Insurrection of 1851*, Princeton, 1979, p. 27. Garrier is, however, probably right to argue that the *démoc-soc* vote had more to do with artisans than the peasantry.

¹⁰ Garrier, *op. cit.*, 1973, pp. 515-17.

¹¹ On the *Conseil général* conservatives were left only with the Legitimist Jerphanion who represented mountainous St Symphorian.

¹² On Aynard see Laurent Jauffret, 'Quelques grands bourgeois lyonnaises dans la deuxième moitié de la XIX^e siècle', *mémoire de maîtrise*, Lyon II, 1987, esp. p. 114-128.

¹³ Vaucelles, *Le Nouvelliste de Lyon et la défense religieuse*, 1879-1889, Paris, 1971, pp. 15-16.

¹⁴ This lends support to W.D. Irvine's view that in most areas Boulangism was hijacked by Orleanists in search of a means of reestablishing contact with the masses. See 'Royalists, Mass Politics and the Boulanger Affair', *French History*, 1989, pp. 31-47, and 'French Royalists and Boulangism', *FHS*, 1988, pp. 395-406.

¹⁵ Delpech, *op. cit.*, *passim.*; J. Joly, (ed.) *Dictionnaire des parlementaires françaises*, 7 vols. Paris, 1962-72; Pons, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-52, 54. The toast of Algiers was rejected by *Salut Public*, *Le Nouvelliste*, and the Orleanist committee. But *Au milieu des sollicitudes* ended the debate, leading to the collapse of an attempt by partisans of religious defence to form a catholic party (*L'union de la France chrétienne*).

¹⁶ Typically, his electoral platform consisted of opposition to both personal power and parliamentary anarchy.

¹⁷ Aynard and the industrialist Sonnery-Cottet at Tarare.

Lyon and the *Conseil général*.¹⁸ Aynard and his allies passed into opposition in both local and national politics, though they remained deeply suspicious of the anti-Republican right.

In 1904 the Progressist *Fédération des comités républicains du sixième arrondissement*, animated by Etienne Fougère, appeared. It was soon extended to cover the whole of the conurbation, and then the department.¹⁹ By 1905 Aynard's followers had adhered to the *Fédération républicaine*, which had been founded in Paris in November 1903 by Eugène Motte in order to regroup the anti-Dreyfusard majority of the Opportunists.²⁰ From the turn of the century until 1936 the *Fédération* was to be the predominant conservative party in the Rhône. It regularly elected three or four of the department's twelve deputies.²¹

There are significant continuities between Orleanism and Progressism. Fear of social upheaval caused Progressists to look to a strong executive. Aynard's purpose was a conjunction of centres against both collectivism and the far right, which he defined in terms of Lyon's Girondin tradition.²² Like Theirs, he saw the Republic as overcoming sterile quarrels.²³ Thirdly, the Progressists defended the Church on grounds of liberty of conscience, and saw it as a useful means of preserving order.²⁴ Aynard can be placed in the Orleanist tradition of economic liberalism, and both Orleanism and Progressism were led by business elites. Often it was only generation which divided Progressists from monarchists. Auguste Isaac, for example, was the son of a member of the old Orleanist committee, who was personally won over to Republicanism by Aynard.²⁵

But for all the continuities, Aynard's liberal Republicanism was historically specific. One of its features was the diversification of the Lyonnais economy. Merchant-manufacturing of luxury silks began to give way to industrial capitalism in the chemical, engineering and especially the silk weaving industries. Greater capital requirements led also to the emergence within the silk industry of a small elite of silk importers and weavers, each with an associated bank.²⁶ Aynard, one of the wealthiest of the latter, made himself the spokesman of a wider group of factory-owning weavers, which saw itself as a new breed of self-made men.²⁷ Optimistic ideas of this variety were strong in the Chamber of Commerce, over which Aynard presided from

18 J. Prévosto, 'Les élections municipales à Lyon de 1900 à 1908', RHMC, 1979, pp. 51-78; Bonnevey, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

19 *L'Union républicaine*, 17-5-1932.

20 For the origins of the *Fédération* see Irvine op. cit., pp. 1-3; *Fonds Louis Marin*, AN 317 AP 70.

21 Ponson, op. cit., pp. 50-1, 54, 302n; Delpech, op. cit., passim.

22 E. Aynard, *Discours prononcés à la Chambre des députés pendant la législature de 1889 à 1893*, Paris, no date, pp. 4-5, 213.

23 Prévosto, op. cit., p. 66.

24 Ponson, op. cit., p. 105. Jauffret, op. cit., pp. 119-120. Aynard opposed the banning of religious orders from teaching on the grounds that to do so would be an offence against liberty of conscience.

25 Ponson, op. cit., 208-9.

26 P. Cayez, *Métiers Jacquard et hauts fourneaux*, passim.

27 M. Laffèrère, *Lyon, ville industrielle: essai de géographie et de techniques industrielles*, Paris, 1960, pp. 188-9.

1891 to 1899. His successors in the presidential chair, Auguste Isaac and Jean Coignet, also played significant roles in the *Fédération républicaine*. Among Aynard's associates were such enterprising businessmen as Henri Germain, Deputy of the Ain and founder of *Crédit Lyonnais*.²⁸ It is also significant that at first Aynard made headway only in the 6th arrondissement of Lyon, the preferred residence of many of the new industrial bourgeoisie. In the first decade of the new century, the 6th remained the sole arrondissement in which the *Fédération républicaine* was well-organized, though because of the presence of numerous artisans and workers in its eastern part, the constituency was not won by the right until 1936.²⁹

Little is known of the electoral base of Progressism in Lyon. But it is safe to assume that the bulk of voters were salaried employees. It might also be speculated that Aynard's brand of liberal elitism and his combination of support for Catholic schools with 'nouvelles couches' rhetoric was what bound them to the right.³⁰ Of course, not all white collar workers were Progressists. Others supported the lay parties and some were linked to the Christian democratic right through nascent trades unions.³¹

Of greater importance in terms of votes was that Aynard's peasant electorate had followed him to the right. Gilbert Garrier attributes this to a return of peasant indebtedness, which permitted landowners and bourgeois to re-establish authority.³² This argument is difficult to sustain in the case of the Plateau, where, if the Church was influential, landowners had never been strong, and where decline of rural weaving deprived urban bourgeois of influence. More weight should be given to the fact that peasant Republicanism on the Plateau had always been of a conservative variety, and although anti-clerical had never been anti-religious. In an area where Catholic values helped preserve conservative medium peasants from the effects of extreme subdivision of land, Aynard's propagation of 'promotion républicaine' through Catholic education no doubt had a certain attraction. There had been no serious economic crisis like that which radicalized the winegrowers of the Beaujolais. This was the peasant France of the 'satisfied centre'.³³

Progressists also gained the votes of the peasantry of the Mountains. But here the relationship between Church, liberal Republicanism and the peasantry was different. Influence of landowners remained strong because the Church formed the only

28 For Joseph Rambaud, editor of the *Nouvelliste*, 'un reptile de centre-gauche'. On Henri Germain see J. Bouvier, *Le Crédit lyonnais*, 1961.

29 Ponson, op. cit., 99-100; Delpech, op. cit., 32-3., pp. 58-70. Also involved in the Aynard group were Etienne Fougère, and François Gillet, both of whom will be met in chapter four; the railway entrepreneur, Felix Mangini; the protestant banker, Morin Pons; the forgemaster and ex-Boulangist, Prénat; Ennmond Morel, one of the most powerful of the *Marchands de Soies*. Most were from Orleanist backgrounds.

30 For example, Aynard spoke of the 'merveilleux instruments de relèvement' put at the disposal of workers by the Republic.

31 See page 31.

32 Garrier, op. cit., pp. 515-7.

33 The expression is from R. Magraw, op. cit., pp. 350-353.

link between farmers living in isolated farms. Republican voting was merely tactical—a consequence of the swamping of the mountain vote by that of the plateau. In the Beaujolais viticole, on the other hand, the right had no chance of electing anyone in a constituency where peasant winegrowers were ferociously anti-clerical. So the sympathies of landowners and their clerical allies remained with royalism and later went to the ALP.

In all three rural regions, just as in Lyon, Catholicism was essential to the cohesion of the right. In the heartlands of Progressism—the Plateau and Lyon itself—Catholicism was grafted onto liberal Republicanism. Technological progress and supply and demand, Aynard argued, were the sole means to improve the lot of humanity.³⁴ Universal suffrage had created a society in which there were no more classes. Free education—lay or religious—enabled all to fulfil their potential through a combination of self-help, savings and temperance. Democracy and education permitted the emergence of an elite, defined in typically Lyonnais terms as a group of men

plus instruits, maîtres de la science ou des arts, ou bien plus pourvus de ressources empruntées ou légitimement acquises, qui ont la rude fonction de diriger le travail, avec tous les responsabilités et tous les risques inhérents à cette direction. Ce sont des esprits supérieurs; ce sont ces directeurs du travail, ceux qui en ont la lourde responsabilité, ceux qui vous [les socialistes] ont donné le suffrage universel.³⁵

Accommodation of Orleanism to democracy cannot be dismissed as a marginal episode. It was related to changes in the structures of the elites, and to an altered relationship with the masses.

Comparison of Aynard's strategy with that of the Roubaix Progressist Eugène Motte is fruitful. David Gordon shows how liberals in the Nord built an alliance of cotton manufacturers and petty bourgeois which was able for a decade to keep Guesdism at bay. Like Aynard, Motte was a Catholic who kept his distance from integrism, partly because of its anti-liberalism, and partly in order to build an alliance with the anti-clerical petty bourgeoisie. His slogan, 'Dieu, petite commerce et liberté', together with a firm commitment to democracy, served to create an anti-socialist alliance. It was broken up only at the end of the 1900s, when anti-clericalism returned to the political agenda.³⁶ Aynard too lauded the petty bourgeoisie, but offered them no material concessions; only the prospect of 'promotion sociale'. His success was more limited because in Lyon, unlike the more socially polarized Roubaix, the petty bourgeoisie was larger, less frightened by socialism, and therefore capable of independent political action. As in the Nord, Aynard's attempts to make defence of property and

³⁴ Aynard, *op. cit.*, p. 203: to those socialists who demanded the eight hour day he replied in a speech of 17-11-1892 'nous avons la conviction que par ce machinisme maudit, constamment amélioré par la science, par ce machinisme sans cesse perfectionné, qui a supprimé d'innombrables souffrances, l'ouvrier arrivera à la journée de huit heures [...] On y arrivera par les seuls progrès de la science et le jeu naturel des choses.

³⁵ Aynard, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-7.

³⁶ D. Gordon, *op. cit.*, pp. 312-93.

economic liberty the rallying cry of the right were disrupted by the religious issue. Progressists were profoundly embarrassed by the crisis over the Law of Separation.³⁷

The disruptiveness of the religious issue from the point of view of business politicians like Aynard, is also emphasized by the unwillingness of many Orleanists to endorse the republic. This tendency is epitomized by *Le Nouvelliste*, founded in 1879. It protested 'neutrality' on the question of the regime. Joseph Rambaud, like his successors in the interwar period, placed defence of religion above all else. But Rambaud was also an integral liberal of the Leroy-Beaulieu school, who urged Christians to see God 'à travers les lois de ce monde économique qui, dans son ensemble et ses moindres détails, porte [...] l'empreint de son éternelle pensée' and like many Progressists he too had business connections. He differed from Progressists in his distrust of mass politics and in an inability to distinguish the cause of the Church from that of social hierarchy.³⁸ Aynard, on the other hand, rejected the integrist view that religion should suffuse all aspects of life.

Rambaud's economic views were in most respects not far removed from Aynard's liberal individualism.³⁹ But there are certain nuances. Rambaud did not share Aynard's vision of an elite constantly renewed by democratic education and economic and scientific progress. Rambaud's portrait of Jules Favre shows an elitist contempt for the *parvenus* of moderate Republicanism: 'le représentant le plus complet de cette caste bourgeoise ambitieuse et cupide, savante et dissolue, qui après s'être élevée par l'intelligence et maintenue par la force, espère encore dans sa décrépitude triompher par l'hypocrisie, opprimer par la corruption'.⁴⁰ In the 1920s the laws of supply and demand were explicitly harnessed to a static view of the economy, but it is possible to see the origins of this view in the late nineteenth century.

At the turn of the century there were signs that some sections of business were attracted by a form of traditionalism. J-P. Houssel shows that cotton manufacturers in the Monts du Beaujolais, in the face of the socialist threat and in a bid to avoid hours regulation, began to disperse their production into the countryside, cultivating a *passéist* myth of an harmonious bucolic society.⁴¹ In Lyon the role played by figures such as Victor Perret (senior)⁴² in some of the conservative political organizations opposed to the Progressists, suggests that some luxury silk merchants without fixed capital were also worried by industrialization and the consequent decline of the arti-

37 G. Lapiere, *La séparation à Lyon (1904-1908). Etude d'opinion publique*, Lyon, 1973, pp. 123-5. Ponson, op. cit., pp. 89-95.

38 Vaucelles, op. cit., pp. 50-55, 114-122. Rambaud was careful, however, not to offend the Legitimist sensibilities of some of his board.

39 Vaucelles, op. cit., pp. 52-55.

40 Quoted in Vaucelles, op. cit., p. 12. (1880). These attitudes confirm Robert Locke's view that in the National Assembly 'The Right-centre [Orleanist intransigents] was more socially conservative than the Centre [supporters of Thiers] because it preferred oligarchy to the middle class democracy Thiers and his friends [like Aynard] were fashioning' (op. cit., p. 51).

41 J.-P. Houssel, *La région de Roanne et le Beaujolais textile face à l'économie moderne*, 2 vols., Lille, 1979, pp. 147-50.

42 Not to be confused with his son, leader of the *Fédération républicaine* in the 1930s.

sanate.⁴³ Their critique of liberalism was however partial, and was perhaps best expressed by the uneasy reconciliation of liberalism and corporatism in the *Action libérale populaire*, and from the late 1920s by the *Fédération républicaine*, once Victor Perret junior had won control over it.

The strand of the Lyonnais right represented by *Le Nouvelliste* proved as durable as Progressism, even though it cannot be said to represent the views of the mass of conservatives. Rambaud's paper, thanks to clerical backing, rapidly built up a large circulation. Progressists subsequently found it difficult to breach *Le Nouvelliste's* acquired position. In the first thirty years of the century they made several attempts to create a daily paper sympathetic to their views,⁴⁴ but always failed dismally. This again dramatizes the tensions of the liberal-Catholic alliance, for *Le Nouvelliste* incessantly criticized the Progressists for their weak defence of the Church.

Le Nouvelliste can also be seen as a link between intransigent Orleanists and a third tendency in the right—Legitimist and Catholic. Legitimism was all but extinct as a political force, but it conserved influence in the legal profession, among landed proprietors and in the Church. Christian Ponson has shown how many monarchists, Legitimists in particular, reacted to the disappointments of Moral Order by using the Church as a means of protecting their social and economic power.

To some extent the institutional network they created resembles a counter-society. It was co-ordinated by the *Congrégation des messieurs de Lyon*, a kind of exclusive Catholic freemasonry. The *Facultés catholiques* (1877), recruited students and professors from the same few hundred families. The *Association catholique des patrons lyonnais* (1871) and De Mun's *Oeuvre des cercles* (1872), limited themselves to the protection of a few proletarian islands from the socialist contagion.⁴⁵ The *Union du sud-est* (USE) (1889) federated agricultural syndicates.

But this entrenchment of integrist elites within the Church hierarchy possessed a wider significance. A network of ostensibly non-political organizations was created which used the immense power of the Church to influence political and social life. The USE contributed to setting the parameters of the debate over agricultural policy. The same applies to *Le Nouvelliste*, which moreover had close links to USESA. This ability of the most reactionary elements of the old elites to maintain their power in unfavourable circumstances is illustrated by the career of the lawyer Charles Jacquier (1848-1928). A one time Legitimist, he continued to be involved in a variety of political organizations of the far right, but above all he devoted his life to the cause of the

43 Ponson, op. cit., pp. 40-42. ALP did not criticize the workings of the internal market; its corporatism often meant little more than professional regulation of apprenticeship.

44 In 1902 Gourd and Auguste Isaac attempted to turn *Salut Public* into a morning paper, a manoeuvre directed against the *Nouvelliste*, 'dont l'intransigeance et le sectarisme commencent à lui faire perdre beaucoup d'abonnés'. Laperrière, op. cit., p. 91, n. 14. In the 1920s the *Nouveau Journal* was an equally unsuccessful attempt to attain the same goal. See Chapter Eight.

45 Ponson, op. cit., pp. 39-52.

Church. He became doyen of the *Faculté catholique de droit*, and in 1925, president of the powerful *Fédération nationale catholique* in the Rhône.⁴⁶ This was part of a restoration of the influence of the long-moribund Legitimist tradition in Lyonnais politics at the end of the 1920s.⁴⁷

Monarchists also attempted to break out of their political isolation. Indeed, it is possible to see in the coming together of royalists with the new radical right the origins of a new anti-liberal alliance. The Rhône had not been a centre of radical Boulangism: the General had declined to present himself in a by-election in the department in 1887, while in the same year the Opportunist membership of the *Ligue des patriotes* had deserted Déroulède as a result of his adventurism.⁴⁸ But at the turn of the century nationalist leagues, thanks to three developments, did play a part in local politics.

First, the crisis in the leadership of the right left the way open for new forms of political activity. Second, the growth of white collar employment in Lyon provided a new audience for the right. In contrast to both Orleanism and Progressism, the leadership of the leagues included a significant proportion of persons of middle and petty bourgeois origin. Auguste Gruffaz, president of a conservative trades union in the silk industry, was a prominent Nationalist militant.⁴⁹ Third, the *Ralliement*, together with the anti-liberal social Catholicism of *Rerum Novarum*, liberated the political energies of 'les nouvelles couches catholiques'.⁵⁰

The consequence was the appearance of a Christian democratic movement grouped around the weekly *La France libre*, linked to Abbé Garnier's *Union nationale*. It combined acceptance of democracy, anti-capitalism, and a call for reforms such as a progressive income tax, with nationalism, anti-Dreyfusism and a savage anti-semitism. The Dreyfus affair put an end to hopes for rapprochement of Catholicism and democracy. *La France libre* ceased publication at the end of January 1899, following quarrels with *Le Nouvelliste* and the hierarchy. Militants such as Auguste Gruffaz found a home in Nationalism.⁵¹

Pre-eminent among the nationalist leagues that prospered in Lyon during and after the Dreyfus affair was *La Ligue de la patrie française*. Police reports stress that 'dans la deuxième ville de France, [...] les idées conservatrices semblent mieux s'accommoder avec le programme modéré de la Patrie française'. The Progressist

46 C. Ponson, op. cit., pp. 19-51.

47 See Chapter Six on the creation of an alliance between the *Fédération républicaine*, the *Oeuvre des cercles*, and the FNC.

48 Sternhell, *La droite révolutionnaire*, p. 96. See page 25: revisionist candidates in the elections of 1889 were all of monarchist origin.

49 AN F⁷ 13 256, surveillance des nationalistes. S. Wilson, 'The Anti-semitic Riots of 1898 in France', *Historical Journal*, vol. 19, 1976, pp. 787-806, shows that the majority of those arrested in the course of an anti-semitic riot in January 1899 were students and petty bourgeois. Desiré Gurnaud, leader of *La Patrie française* was the lawyer son of a white collar worker.

50 See chapter 1.

51 AN F⁷ 13 256; Ponson, op. cit., pp. 62-67.

deputy Gouraud was seen at one of its meetings, and in December 1903 Gurnaud, the leader of *La Patrie*, fused its journal with *L'Express de Lyon*, controlled by Aynard.⁵²

The marriage, however, was short-lived. Aynard and Isaac wanted nationalist patronage at no price, while Gurnaud saw the Progressists as 'reactionary'. *La Patrie* was in fact a loose organization, simultaneously drawn in other directions. It had excited the interest of royalists, including such well-known Legitimists as Charles Jacquier and the brothers Lucien-Brun.⁵³ Neither did all the leagues with which *La Patrie* collaborated share the moderate aims of Gurnaud. Capitaine Mège, leader of the local section of Guérin's *Grand occident de France*⁵⁴ was also, until the summer of 1901, a leading adherent of *La Patrie*. Even after this date the two leagues continued to collaborate, although Gurnaud disapproved of a the *Grand occident's* contacts with the *Jeunesse royaliste*, led by Pierre de Saint-Victor of a Beaujolais Legitimist family. Finally, *La patrie* received the support of the Blanquiste deputy of the 3rd arrondissement of Lyon.⁵⁵

There were also overlaps between nationalism and the more moderate *Action libérale populaire*, founded in 1901 with the active support of Cardinal Coullié. Militants such as the future deputy Pierre Lenail and Victor Perret (senior) were involved in both movements. Again, leading royalists such as Ravier de Magny and the Lucien-Bruns were present at its meetings and in its committees. *Action libérale* experienced some success during the Separation crisis, though it never posed a significant threat to the Progressists even in the countryside where it was at its strongest.⁵⁶ Disappointment in the elections of 1906, and in 1907 the reversal of papal policy towards the Republic led to the decline of ALP. Many monarchists subsequently turned up in the committees of *Action française* and the separate royalist committee.⁵⁷

Thus the turn of the century witnessed the coming together of some of the remnants of monarchism with a new plebeian right. This meeting took various political forms, from Christian democracy, through the Republican ALP and *La Patrie française*, to the proto-fascist *Grand occident*. Emergence of the extreme right in the early years of the twentieth century cannot be explained, following Zeev Sternhell, in terms of the conjunction of radical nationalism and dissident socialism. Blanquistes may have contributed, but it must not be forgotten that they had changed sides, and that this was recognized by the electorate. Rather, the new radical right was associ-

⁵² AN F⁷ 13 256; Laperrière, op. cit., 87-92.

⁵³ They were among fifty royalists who attended a meeting of Jules Lemaître in March 1901.

⁵⁴ Formerly the *Ligue antisemitique* of Drumont.

⁵⁵ AN F⁷ 13 256.

⁵⁶ The ALP was strongest in the Beaujolais viticole, the mountains and in the *Croix Rousse* district of Lyon, where there was a vibrant popular Catholicism.

⁵⁷ Ponson, op. cit., pp. 100-102; Depierre, op. cit., pp. 76-77. Does the strength of ALP in the 1st and 4th arrondissements, home of the traditional silk industry, along with the presence of fabricants such as Victor Perret and Louis Chavent confirm the thesis of fear of unrestrained industrialization?

ated with conflicts within the *classe dirigeante*, its search for a mass base in the age of democracy, and the rise of white collar employment.⁵⁸

In spite of the ferment on the far right Progressism was firmly established by 1901 as the predominant conservative force. Does then the example of the Rhône confirm the Elwitt-Lebovics' thesis of a remaking of the French bourgeoisie on a basis of protectionism, anti-socialism and reformism? Certainly anti-socialism was Aynard's rallying cry, and one of his aims was to win over the anti-clerical petty bourgeoisie. But beyond this some important qualifications must be made.

In the first place the Progressists were integral liberals.⁵⁹ Sanford Elwitt's depiction of Aynard as a participant in a reformist consensus does not ring true. He may have participated in Le Playist associations, but his interpretation of reform was individual.⁶⁰ His interest in cheap working class housing reinforced a low wage policy by fixing workers in one place, and was not accompanied by the kind of paternalism seen in other areas. Workers' savings banks were intended to facilitate *individual* social mobility. Similarly, Hermann Lebovics is wrong to underplay Lyonnais anti-protectionism.⁶¹ In fact, in disputes over protectionism within the silk industry Aynard, Isaac and the Chamber of Commerce reaffirmed faith in commercial liberty. Protectionism was no more than a minority movement in Lyon.⁶² Finally, although undoubtedly imperialism was a powerful means of integrating French elites, Lyonnais imperialism was one of free trade.

The strength of liberalism in Lyon leads to the suspicion that although the Méline tariff undoubtedly inaugurated a policy of protecting small producers, it was not of fundamental importance in holding the regime together. Aynard denounced the Méline tariff as a return to *Ancien régime* protectionism, a society of 'small industry, living off secrecy, monopoly [and] privilege'.⁶³ He certainly sought an alliance of capitalism and petty production, and agitated fear of collectivism, but like Eugène Motte, he made use of an older Republican ideology. And like Motte, founder and president of the *Fédération républicaine*, Aynard was a leading figure in Progressism in spite of his hostility to protectionism. What held Republicanism together was not a specific set of economic policies, but rather an agreed set of codes for the identification of allies and enemies, and a framework within which differences could be incor-

58 Of course, white collar workers also provided electoral support for the Progressists, and indeed, for the left. The case of Lyon confirms the interpretation of R. Magraw, *op.cit.*, ch. 7.

59 Elwitt, *op. cit.*, p. 236; 'Aynard had a special interest and long experience in social reform'. This is just one example of a tendency towards amalgamation of quite distinct ideologies which reaches Sternhellian proportions.

60 L. Jauffret, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-128, concludes that Aynard's understanding of Le Playism was simply that the industrialist had to do his best to avoid sackings during recessions, and to explain the inanities of Marxism to the workers. That would be sufficient to create the 'industrial family'.

61 Lebovics, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-55. He argues that imperialism provided a cushion for free traders, adding that a protectionist current appeared in the silk industry in the 1900s.

62 It would be interesting to discover the precise details of the relationship between protectionism and conservatism in the Rhône.

63 Aynard, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5: he continued, 'quant à la grande industrie, reine de notre temps, qui s'épanouit au grand air, qui avec ses forces indéfinies, vit et ne peut vivre que d'expansion, son régime naturel est le régime de la liberté'.

porated. This in fact is a pre-condition of a society in which 'negotiated consent', rather than repression is the chief mode of social integration.

Even if these arguments are not accepted, it remains that the 'social protection' thesis must be modified to account for the non-adherence to the consensus of two of the most important industrial regions in France.

Furthermore, the example of the Rhône shows that the religious question continued to disrupt right wing politics. The Progressists themselves were unable to remain above this issue because their appeal was bound up with Catholicism. Secondly, integrist Catholicism was bound up with a minority far right, which was able at the time of the Separation and Inventory crisis to gain a wider audience. Third, the Church was never a docile tool of any movement of the right. Furthermore, the *Ralliement* put an end to the political unity of Catholicism. Encouraged by the Church, conservative white collar workers were beginning to question economic liberalism. Aynard's Republicanism, although hegemonic, was also unstable. It needed constant political management if it was to reconcile economic and ideological contradictions.

From Bloc national to Union national

In the aftermath of the Great War the triumph of liberal Republicanism seemed complete. In the general elections of 1919 the *Fédération républicaine*, *Alliance démocratique*, ALP and Independent Radicals united in a single list. Aynard having died in 1913, leadership of conservative forces passed to his close associates, Auguste Isaac and Laurent Bonnevey. In the unusual conditions of this election, seven out of twelve members of the conservative list were elected.⁶⁴ Five years later, the same alliance was reproduced in new elections, though on this occasion the unity of SFIO and Radicals ensured that not a single conservative was elected. But the impression of consensus and continuity on the right is confirmed by the relative weakness of the extreme right in the Rhône during the crisis of the Cartel.

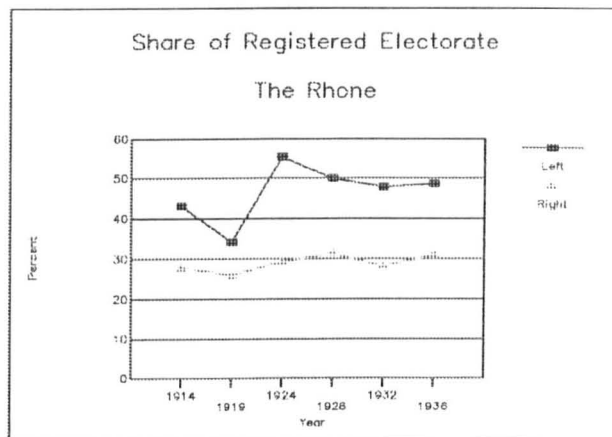
Yet the old problems of conservative politics remained. The right failed to overcome its minority status. Aynard's dream of an alliance with the Radicals remained unrealized. In 1919 in spite of the best efforts of Weitz, president of the *Comité Républicain de commerce et de l'industrie*, a *Bloc national* list was not formed in the Rhône, thanks to the refusal of Herriot to accept the participation of Gourd.⁶⁵ As a result the right remained in a minority in the Rhône throughout the interwar period. This can be seen in Graph 1, which shows the combined votes of all candidates of right and left from 1914 to 1936.⁶⁶ The right never won more than 33% of those eligible to vote, and never elected more than four or five of the department's

⁶⁴ This was by far the best result obtained by the right in the department during the Third Republic, though in terms of actual votes the right-left balance had hardly shifted since 1914.

⁶⁵ Gric, op. cit., pp. 56-7; S. Bernstein, *Edouard Herriot ou la République en personne*, Paris, 1985.

⁶⁶ See also Table 1 in Appendix 2.

deputies.⁶⁷ The right's performance on the municipal council of Lyon was equally poor, for in 1935, its best year, it won only 14 out of 54 seats. All other industrial towns were also held by the left, with the exception of Amplepuis and Cours. Only the *Conseil général* functioned intermittently as a counterweight to the power of the left.⁶⁸ The right won an overall majority in this body in 1934, but factional squabbles deprived it of the fruits of victory.



Graph 1

Meanwhile the internal cohesion of the right was undermined by the emergence of a challenge to the Federation from within the parliamentary right in the form of the *Alliance démocratique* and the PDP. In 1914 all candidates were either members of or in one case allied to the Federation.⁶⁹ But from 1928 until 1932, as Graph 2 reveals, the centre right vote steadily increased. In part this is deceptive, because often it was a matter of the desertion of Federation deputies such as Laurent Bonnevey (Beaujolais Mountains) and J-B Delorme (Givors) to the Alliance, and voters were given no choice of conservative candidate. Nonetheless, the tendency is clear.

Like the Federation the Alliance was a product of the Dreyfus affair, grouping those moderate Republicans who had rallied to Waldeck-Rousseau's government of Republican Defence. Although E. Aynard had played a part in the formation of the national organization, the party had at first been insignificant in Lyon.⁷⁰ Before the war only a few individuals, such as the deputy Fleury-Ravarin, had been associated with it. Even he presented himself to the electorate under the umbrella of the FR.

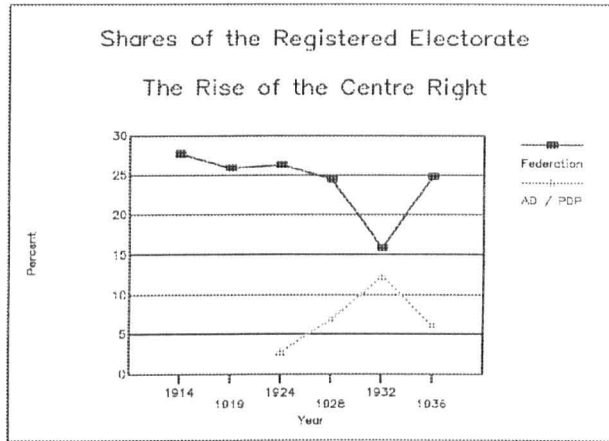
⁶⁷ Four in 1928; three in 1932; five in 1936.

⁶⁸ Mainly because use of cantonal boundaries in local elections led to an over-representation of rural areas. Thirteen constituencies in the agglomeration of Lyon represented an average of 10,874 electors, while twenty mainly rural cantons englobed an average of 4,961 voters. According to the electoral lists of 1936.

⁶⁹ The ally was Claudius Aury in the Beaujolais, who was linked to both ALP and Federation.

⁷⁰ G. Lachapelle, *L'Alliance Démocratique*, Paris, 1935.

From 1919, however, as the Federation became more firmly anchored on the right, the Alliance began assert its independence, especially in the 6th arrondissement.



Graph 2

Alongside the lay centre right was a new Christian democratic party, the PDP. It appeared in Lyon a few days after its founding conference in Paris, on 15th and 16th November 1924.⁷¹ Although it never achieved the electoral success of the Alliance, the PDP too was to become a source of concern to the Federation, not least because of sympathy for its reformist aims on the left of the Federation.

By the late 1920s the Federation itself was in the grip of crisis. Auguste Isaac resigned as national leader of the Federation after defeat in the elections of 1924. The election of Louis Marin as his successor led to a marked shift to the right. After this date Isaac ceased to play a visible political role in the Rhône. Within the party a power struggle developed. On one side stood the new departmental president, François Peissel. He was a moderate who favoured the international policy of Briand, the conservative reformism of Tardieu and some of the ideas put forward by social Catholics. In spite of this Peissel enjoyed the support of liberal grandees like Isaac. No doubt this was because Peissel was infinitely preferable to his rival, Victor Perret. The latter was an ally and friend of Louis Marin, to whose intransigence in international affairs Perret added an equally intransigent attitude to social reform and an ambiguity towards parliamentary democracy. Both Perret and Peissel, then, broke with the integral liberalism of Aynard and Isaac.

By mid-1932 Perret's faction had established complete control over the Federation. But the price of his victory had been a strengthening of the centre right. In the two chapters which follow the social and economic dimensions of the collapse of the liberal tradition will be examined.

⁷¹ For the formation of the PDP see J. Raymond-Laurent, *Le Parti démocrate populaire*, Le Mans, 1965.

Chapter three

Change in rural society

A relatively insignificant 18% of the population of the Rhône lived in communes defined as rural; 64,000 economically active persons were occupied in agriculture. The figures confirm the urban and industrial nature of the department. Yet because of the advantage that conservative parties drew from the overrepresentation of the countryside in electoral bodies, the rural world cannot be neglected.

During the *belle époque* the peasantry had provided relatively passive support for the right. In the mountains, where isolated peasants were subject to clerical influence, or in the Beaujolais where conservatism depended on the ties of landowner and sharecropper, it is possible even to speak of manipulation. In these areas the elites supported Progressists for tactical reasons, but at heart remained monarchists and integrists. On the plateau, on the other hand, there existed a peasant conservatism based on protection of status and loyalty to Progressist notables. In the interwar period the conditions in which notable politics had flourished broke down in all three regions, leading to the growth of socialism in the Beaujolais and of the *Croix de Feu* and PSF in the rest of the department from 1935.

One cause of change was a strengthening of medium peasant farms: there was a fall of 36% in the number of exploitations in the Rhône between 1912 and 1942, while their average size increased from 6.5 to 9.5 hectares. Losses were essentially from the ranks of small property holders.¹ The background to these changes was the decline in population.² Before 1914 the rural exodus in the Rhône had been relatively restrained. But losses in action, the resulting low marriage and birth rates, together with high mortality, and the attraction of employment in an expanding industrial economy, caused depopulation to gather pace.³ Small peasants were least likely to have the capital necessary for reconstruction of their holdings, and were most likely to limit families to a single child.

Depopulation led in many areas to domination of villages by medium peasants, as the rural bourgeoisie, petty-bourgeoisie and marginal proprietors departed. One result was gradual conquest of the *Conseil général* by the right, for medium peasants were mainly conservative. In the longer term it also contributed to peasant self-consciousness. Meanwhile tenants and sharecroppers benefited from a shortage of competition for leases, which may have assisted them in shaking off the domination of landowners.

¹ Garrier, *op. cit.*, pp. 581-2. The structural analysis of peasant society that follows is heavily reliant on Garrier. However, Garrier draws few general conclusions in his section on the interwar years.

² Garrier, *op. cit.*, pp. 463-91, especially pp. 464 and 487.

³ Garrier, *op. cit.*, pp. 619-35.

Peasant isolation was also broken down by greater integration into the market economy. But the agricultural population also became more vulnerable to price fluctuations at a time when the Church accentuated its critique of economic liberalism. One of the chief signs of the breakdown of notable politics was the challenge posed by the *Jeunesse agricole chrétienne* to established agricultural syndicalism. Before analyzing the impact of these changes in the different regions of the Rhône it is necessary to provide a brief introduction to the conservative electorate in the department.

The Conservative Electorate

The election of 1932⁴ has been used to produce a typology of political orientations in the communes situated outside the agglomeration.⁵ Fourteen types were produced, which have been regrouped into three categories according to whether there was predominance of right or left, or near equality of the two camps. They are plotted on Maps 3.2 to 3.4, while map 3.1 shows the conservative vote as a percentage of those who voted. The mean percentage of votes cast in each type, together with the number of communes in each type is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Typology of voting behaviour in 1932. Mean percentage of votes cast by type					
Type	Number	Right	Radical	SFIO	PCF
1	25	89	6	4	1
2	37	74	16	8	2
3	32	62	28	8	3
4	22	52	10	33	4
5	41	51	40	6	3
6	1	14	81	1	4
7	42	38	43	13	5
8	2	9	45	46	0
9	7	27	35	31	8
10	1	5	0	93	2
11	4	23	12	64	1
12	36	37	12	49	2
13	7	9	45	46	1
14	1	26	14	38	22

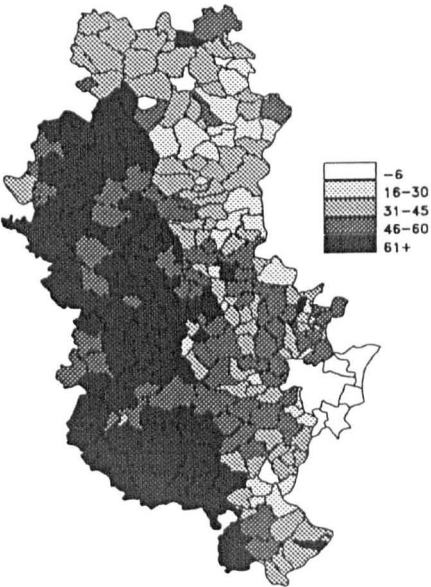
It can be seen from Map 3.2 that almost all areas of right wing predominance were located in the mountains. The conservative vote is highest in type one, which is most often found in the interiors of the ranges, and where the average score of the right was no less than 89%. In type two it falls to a still impressive 74%. The third type, in which conservative candidates gained on average 62%, is distinguished by a certain

⁴ It is difficult to choose a general election which is representative of the conservative electorate because of the failure of the Radicals to present a candidate in the second constituency of Villefranche in 1932 and 1936. 1932 was chosen for this analysis because it represents the mid-point in the decline of Radicalism: in 1928 a Radical candidate was presented; in 1932 a 'Socialiste français' was endorsed, and in 1936 no candidate at all was presented.

⁵ The method used is hierarchical cluster analysis (See M. J. Norusis, *SPSS-X Introductory Statistics Guide*, Chicago, 1988). Briefly, the technique involves grouping the communes into types according to similarities in voting patterns. Note that the separation of the fourteen types into three on the maps was not the result of statistical analysis, but was done to facilitate interpretation.

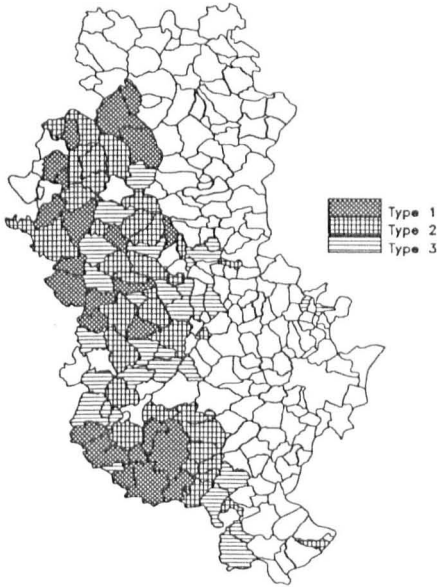
The General Election of 1932 in the Rhone

Th Conservative vote in 1932
Percentage of registered electorate



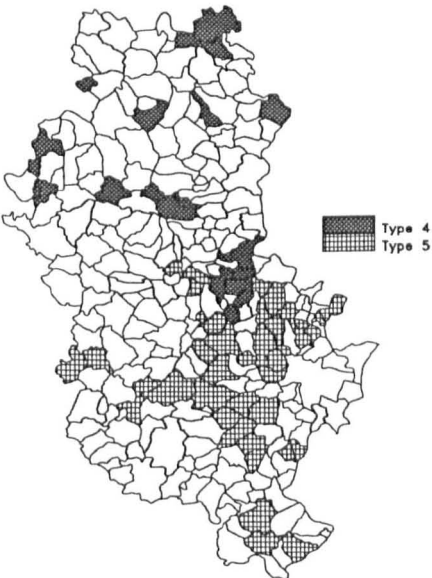
Map 5.3

Typology of Political Orientations, 1932
The Right



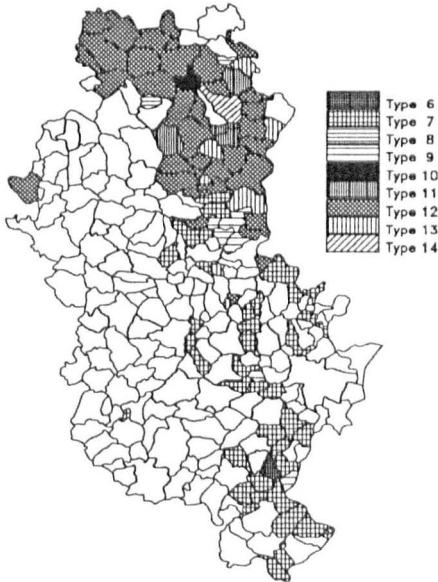
Map 5.4

Typology of Political Orientations, 1932
Equality of Left and Right



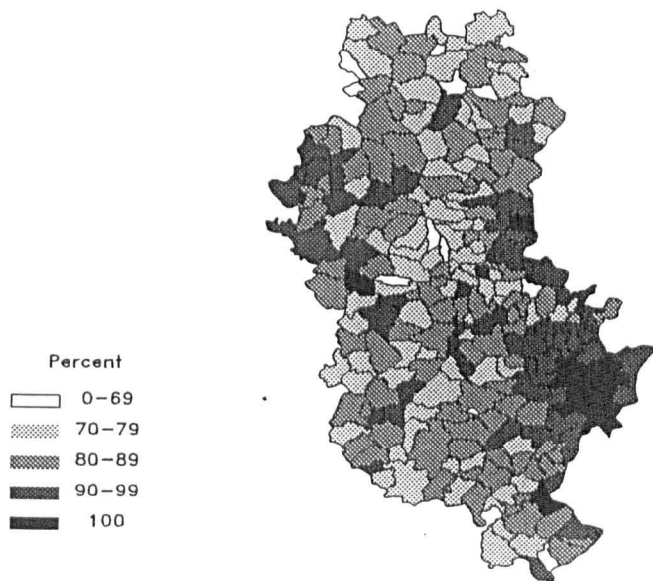
Map 5.5

Typology of Political Orientations, 1932
The Left



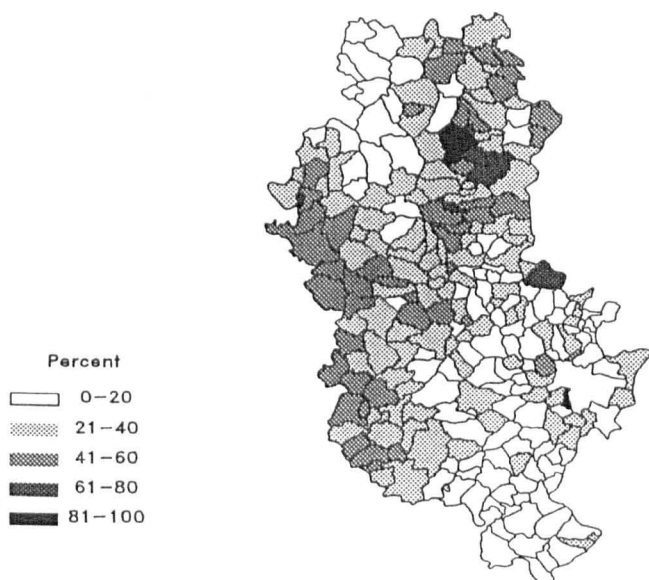
Map 5.6

The non-agricultural population
1935



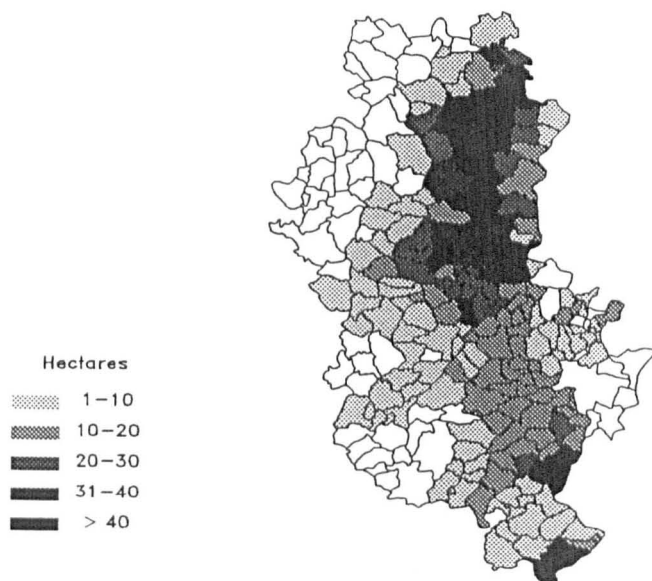
Map 3.5

Fermlers and Metayers
1935



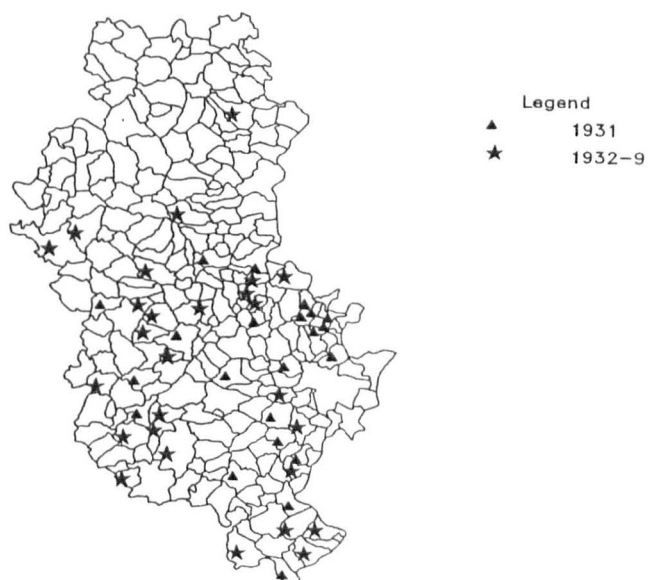
Map 3.6

Percentage of farmland
occupied by the vine in 1929



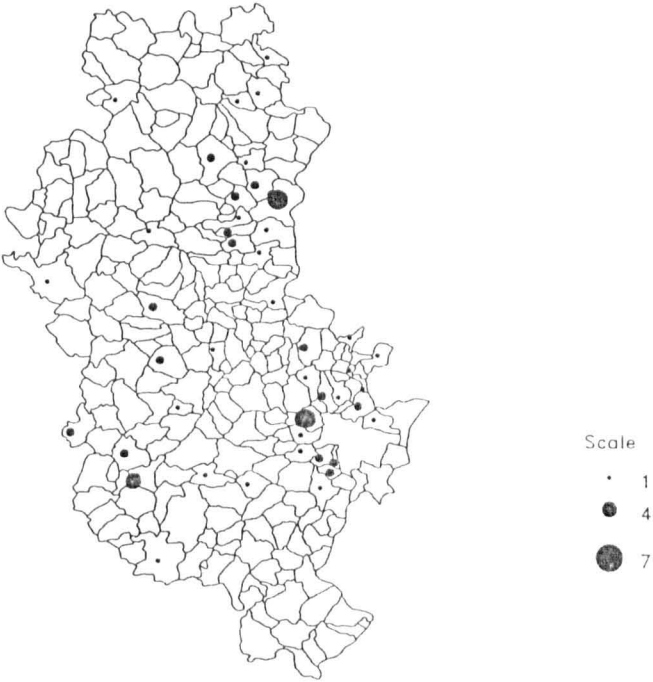
Map 3.7

The Jeunesse agricole chrétienne
1931 to 1939



Map 3.8

Residence of nobles in the Rhone



Map 3.9

strength of radicalism. The only parts of the mountains in which the left was able to challenge the right was in industrial towns and villages in the Beaujolais mountains (type four), and the Brévenne valley (type five).

On the plateau two types predominate. Type five, in which the right gained a small majority of votes (51%), represents a transition from conservative strength in the mountains to relative weakness in the more densely populated industrial east. It covers much of the west and north of the plateau, as well as the Brévenne valley. On the eastern fringe of the plateau and in isolated industrial centres like Sain Bel the conservative score falls to a still respectable 38% (type seven). The main rivals of the right in both cases were the Radicals.

The Beaujolais viticole, like mountainous Monsols to the north, was a bastion of socialism.⁶ In the four communes of type eleven, for example, the socialist vote was 64%, while in type twelve, to which 37 communes belong, it was 49%. Only in a few communes, mainly situated in the canton of Anse, were conservatives a match for the combined left, winning an average of 52% of the vote.

Contemporaries were in no doubt that this pattern was accounted for by two variables: Catholicism and agriculture.⁷ A report at the 1936 congress of the *Fédération républicaine* identified the Catholic peasantry as the main source of support for the party, admitted an inability to cross the Catholic-anti-clerical divide, and reported a lack of success in small rural towns where the socialists could exploit their 'ridiculous tall story about the 200 families'.⁸

The geography of conservatism lends considerable support to these views. It coincides broadly with the Map of religious practice.⁹ Neither is there any reason to doubt a correlation between the agricultural population and right wing voting, as comparison of voting patterns with the distribution of electors registered on the Chamber of Agriculture lists shows (map 3.5). The same relationship appears even at the lowest level of analysis. A report on the commune of St. Genis l'Argentière (St. Laurent) divided the population into two parts: 800 farmers who were mainly conservatives, and twenty-seven leftists who were employed in local quarries and tile factories.¹⁰

6 The most important wine producing communes bordering the Rhône also show a high propensity to vote for the left—in this case the Radicals. That a mountainous canton like Monsols was socialist is to be explained by the concentration of inhabitants in small villages where many were occupied in sawmills, and by the fact that many inhabitants worked at harvest time for winegrowers.

7 B.M.E. Léger, *Les opinions politiques des provinces françaises*, Paris, 1934, p. 139-40: 'Les populations agricoles, la bourgeoisie des campagnes sont modérées; les ouvriers des multiples usines installées dans le pays sont, en revanche, révolutionnaires; ils ne constituent cependant qu'une minorité, le plus souvent, sauf toutefois dans la première circonscription de Villefranche qui est assez 'avancée'—mais qui comporte des éléments modérés importants'.

8 *L'Union Républicaine*, 21-6-1936. Much the same conclusion is reached by Serge Bernstein, who suggests that the Rhône was one of a number of areas in which supremacy of small and medium property was not associated with hegemony of Radicalism: 'c'est le rôle du parti dans les villes petites et moyennes qui explique son audience électorale' (Bernstein, *Histoire du Parti radicale*, Paris, 2 vols., 1984 p. 308).

9 G. Le Bras, *Etudes de sociologie religieuse*, between pp. 324 and 325.

10 ADR 4m, *conseils municipaux*, dossier St. Laurent de Chamousset, report of 16-4-1941. See also De Farcy on the division between launderers and peasants in Craponne, op. cit., pp. 129-30.

All the same, the correlation between conservatism and the peasantry must be qualified. Variables such as form and size of landholding, extent of involvement in the market, settlement patterns and sociability must also be taken into account. Only a comprehensive analysis of the multiple interrelationships between them would allow firm conclusions. We have, however, to be content with examination of some of the influences on the conservative vote, using the method of multiple regression.

There are, unfortunately, no department-wide statistics which give the sizes of farms worked by peasants.¹¹ But useful data on forms of landholding can be obtained from the electoral lists of the Chamber of Agriculture of 1935. These distinguish six categories of elector, of which four are useful: proprietors, tenants and sharecroppers, agricultural labourers and retired farmers.¹² The lists are not a perfect source. They do not distinguish between tenants and sharecroppers; only those over twenty-five were allowed to vote in Chamber of Agriculture elections, and there is no guarantee that all those entitled to register actually did so. All the same, Map 3.6, which shows the percentage of the first two categories who were either tenants or sharecroppers appears to be a reasonable approximation to reality. The proportion of proprietors in the whole department on the electoral list—73%, is not too far removed from a figure of 60-70% given by a contemporary national survey.¹³

Other variables examined are first, difference in population between 1911 and 1936: positive correlations indicate strength in communes suffering from depopulation. Second, the number of wine co-operative members as a proportion of those inscribed on the electoral list, is a rough guide to the significance of small winegrowers.¹⁴ Lastly, density of population has been included as a measure of the strength of the industrial population.

Clearly the models which result are likely to be somewhat weak. This is partly because important variables are lacking. Also, correlations between the dependent variable (vote) and some of the independent variables are diminished because the latter are not homogeneous. For example the category 'proprietors' lumps together Catholic gentry and anti-clerical smallholders. More serious still is the failure to distinguish sharecroppers and tenants. For this reason the fifty-one communes in which the proportion of agricultural land devoted to cultivation of the vine was greater than 30% are analysed separately, on the assumption that these include sharecroppers and not tenants.¹⁵ Analysis of the rest of the department covers 189 communes where less

11 For sizes of holdings we have only Gilbert Garrier's sampling of representative communes.

12 ADR 7 Mp 36, *Listes électorales de la Chambre d'agriculture*. See also H. Rollet, *Les Chambres d'Agriculture*, Lyon, 1926, especially pp. 94-5. The other two categories were female heads of agricultural families, and women who had taken the place of their husbands during the war.

13 *Atlas de France. Comité national de géographie; Société française de cartographie*, Plaque N° 41. The map indicates 10-20% tenants and 10-15% sharecroppers.

14 The latter figures were obtained from the maps in Perrin, op cit.

15 The source of this information is Garrier, op. cit., Map 42. In the Beaujolais, where much land is of poor quality, 30% was a considerable amount of land to devote to the vine.

than 20% of cultivatable land was occupied by the vine. As a result twenty-three communes where the confusion of tenants and sharecroppers can be assumed to be greatest are excluded from the analysis. But this was the only way to achieve meaningful results.

In wine growing areas the conservative vote correlates best with communes where population loss between 1911 and 1936 had been greatest, where proprietors were numerous, co-operative members few, and where the proportion of land devoted to the vine was relatively low.¹⁶ Given that population loss led often to domination of villages by medium proprietors, and given also the appeal of the co-operative movement to smaller proprietors, it can be inferred that conservatism in the Beaujolais was an affair of polycultural medium and large peasant proprietors. This is confirmed by the strength of Radicalism in communes with more stable and therefore less homogeneous populations.

Although the model is not very strong, it is also interesting to look at the electorate of the socialists. Best explained by monoculture of the vine and the presence of co-operative members, it is reasonable to assume that socialism appealed to small proprietors who saw in cooperation a means of escaping subservience to the market.¹⁷ Particularly intriguing is the absence of correlation between either socialist or conservative votes and sharecroppers. A report to a congress of the PDP in 1935 claimed that socialism 's'est faufilé dans les vigneronnages même des gros propriétaires'.¹⁸ Our results suggest that many sharecroppers must have remained faithful to landowners, but that socialists had made progress in this traditionally deferential category.¹⁹

In non-winegrowing communes the model is weak where the conservative vote is the dependent variable. Again, however, there is an association between conservatism and population loss. The importance of this variable is confirmed by a stronger model for the Radical vote, which shows the expected negative correlation with communes in which population was declining. Here too, emigration of artisans and small proprietors strengthened the right and weakened Radicalism. Albert Pin shows that this was the explanation for the passage to the right of Messimy (Vaugneray) in 1919. The process was exemplified by mayor Jean Parrel, whose farm grew by renting, purchase and inheritance from little more than five hectares in 1919 to nearly fifteen in 1939.²⁰

¹⁶ The equations are reproduced in Appendix 2.

¹⁷ The negative correlation of socialists with proprietors is not incompatible with this view. It merely means that socialists were a minority among proprietors in general.

¹⁸ *Nouveau Journal*, 25-2-1935.

¹⁹ It is likely that sharecroppers passed directly from conservatism to socialism, and did not travel via radicalism. Socialism was not merely an extreme form of Republicanism. This supports the argument of Tony Judt, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

²⁰ See the excellent A. Pin, *mémoire de maîtrise*, Lyon II, 1989, on the career of his grandfather, Jean Parrel.

As in winegrowing communes, differentiation among the peasantry is problematic. Tenants are a somewhat better indicator of the conservative vote than proprietors, though whether this was due to greater prosperity, openness to the influence of landowners, or simply to the fact that tenants lived in areas of high religious practice, is open to question. As for proprietors, they also contribute to explanation of the Radical vote, which means that the right cannot have monopolized this category. In the mountains most proprietors, whatever the size of their holdings, were conservative. In Ste. Catherine (Mornant) where the right gained 162 of 183 votes cast, only 14 tenants were inscribed on the electoral lists of the Chamber of Agriculture, against 70 proprietors. In some strongly agricultural communes on the plateau, on the other hand, Radicalism dominated. In Montagny (Givors) 63% of registered electors voted Radical and only 11% for the right;²¹ 41% of the electorate were listed as proprietors. Given the negative correlation between Radicalism and population loss, it would seem that it was mainly small proprietors, perhaps also engaged in non-agricultural pursuits, who voted for the Radicals.²²

The Mountains

In the mountains conservative voting depended more on the influence of the Church over an isolated and relatively poor peasantry than upon the influence of the notables who led the right in the mountains. This is why the right held the allegiance of both proprietors and tenants.

A number of very large properties stood out from the peasant mass. It was either forested or worked by tenant farmers.²³ Landowners were noble in the Monts du Lyonnais. Although the Comte de St. Victor owned 600 hectares at Ronno,²⁴ bourgeois property was more common in the Monts du Beaujolais, especially around Tarare where businessmen and other wealthy residents of cotton towns owed land (see Map 3.9). These differences explain why the moderate Republican conservatism of Laurent Bonnevey dominated in the Monts du Beaujolais, whereas the influence of landowners nourished an older variety of conservatism in the Monts du Lyonnais. Both, however, depended on peasant passivity and a friendly Church.

Most farmers owned and worked their own land, though as Map 3.6 shows, tenants were more numerous in the mountains than anywhere else in the department.²⁵ It is difficult to say anything meaningful about the size of peasant farms, ex-

²¹ It is worth noting that Montagny was a commune of concentrated settlement.

²² An interesting account of political alignments comes from an administrative report on factional struggles in the commune of Marcilly (Limonest) in 1943. They opposed '80 personnes vivant des foyers des gros producteurs' to '350 personnes composées de petits cultivateurs et des leurs, d'artisans, d'ouvriers'. ADR 4m conseils municipaux, dossier Marcilly.

²³ Garrier says that they were most numerous in the south, in the canton of St. Symphorian sur Coise. A look at the cantonal distribution of tenants and share-croppers on the electoral lists of the Chamber of Agriculture, however, suggests that the proportion of tenant farmers was highest in St. Laurent (45%) ADR 7 Mp 36. The answer could be that they worked a greater proportion of the soil in St. Symphorian.

²⁴ The Marquis d'Albon had 260 hectares at St. Romain de Popeye.

²⁵ Category one electors always outnumber those in category two.

cept that there is some evidence that tenants were relatively privileged. They tended to be grouped in areas where conditions were better, such as the mountain interiors and the Azergues valley.

In those parts of the mountains in which terrain permitted agricultural activity, farmers lived either in hamlets of two or three families or in isolated dwellings in the middle of farms (see Map 1.3). This, in other words was the classic settlement pattern in areas of poor upland farming where farms had to be large.²⁶ Communication was possible but not always easy, especially during the winter. The steep slopes of the mountain borders were a barrier. They split the commune of Thurins into two separate worlds. As late as 1949 dwellers in the upland part of the commune went to mass in Yzeron and to the market in St. Martin en Haut. Only administrative reasons obliged them to descend to Thurins-bourg.²⁷ Dairy farmers in the cantons of St. Symphorian and St. Laurent were obliged by the insufficiency of the transport system to specialize in the production of cheese and butter rather than milk.²⁸

Mountain society was therefore somewhat cut off from the rest of the department.²⁹ Often within the mountains the only regular link between peasant families was provided by attendance at mass. In a passage which applies particularly to the mountains one contemporary commentator wrote of the Rhône peasantry that 'dans les campagnes, après la grand'messe, les hommes envahissent les cafés, car c'est le seul moment pour ces braves gens de se rencontrer; de discuter de leurs intérêts professionnels comme de ceux de la commune; toute le reste de la semaine, chacun se livre à ses propres occupations, sans trop se soucier de son voisin'. Religious practice was indeed high in the mountains. In the commune of Yzeron 92% of men and 96% of women attended church on Sundays.³⁰

During the 1920s the structures of mountain society were beginning to alter, and with them the relationship of the peasantry to notables. Firstly, progress of medium properties at the expense of small matched the general trend in the department. As elsewhere the cause was a decline in population. It was most evident in the Monts du Beaujolais, where silk and cotton weaving ceased from the late nineteenth century to provide supplementary income to peasants scraping a living from improv-

26 A. Perrin, 'Le Mont d'Or lyonnais et ses abords', ER, vol. 3, p. 55-81; Guiot, op. cit., passim. Scarcely any non-industrial commune in the mountains had more than 40% of their population living in the bourg. For Tony Judt a figure of less than 50% characterizes conservative communes in the Var (T. Judt, *Socialism in Provence*, Cambridge, 1979).

27 Guiot, op. cit., passim.

28 Garrier, op. cit., pp. 611-2; Perrin, op. cit., passim: Even the small massif of the Monts d'Or was an obstacle to the influence of Lyon, allowing anachronistic rural habitats to survive in the commune of Poleymieux, in close proximity to the *banlieu*.

29 Henry Lagardette, wrote in 1931 of the Beaujolais Mountains '[...] restées si pleines de mystères, jusqu'à l'apparition de l'automobile, que les habitants du vignoble le considéraient comme aussi inaccessible et aussi lointain que le pôle nord!'. It was said that in the not too distant past the inhabitants of the Beaujolais had believed the mountains to be inhabited by fairies. (H. Lagardette, *Impressions Beaujolais: De la résistance à la vigne*, Lyon, 1931).

30 G. Le Bras, *Etudes de sociologie religieuse*, Paris, 1938, pp. 153-4; G. Le Bras, 'Notes de statistique et d'histoire religieuses', *Revue d'histoire de l'Eglise de France* 6, 1933, pp. 503-505; G. Le Bras, *Introduction à l'histoire de la pratique religieuse en France*, (two vols.), Paris, 1942 and 1945; de Farcy, op. cit., pp. 139-40.

erished soils.³¹ The communes of the Monts du Lyonnais were less affected. A natural surplus of births over deaths only just failed to compensate for emigration of the young.³²

Second, there are signs that the ties of dependence between landlord and tenant were beginning to break down. This was partly because of the difficulty of finding tenants in a period of rural exodus and partly because of absenteeism. Proprietors resident in Lyon often left total liberty to their tenants, not daring to increase a sometimes derisory rent. Often land was sold to the tenant.³³

Thirdly dairy farming was beginning to transform the economy of the mountains.³⁴ In the early 1920s peasants remained subsistence farmers. It was calculated in 1926 that the price of milk covered only half of production costs. Also, there were problems resulting from the over-population and mongrelization of cattle, insufficient forage, and epidemics of foot and mouth disease. Yet matters gradually improved. After a two year struggle by producers' associations, including an abortive strike in 1922, the price of milk was raised to a more satisfactory level by an accord with the wholesale trade in 1924. A marked improvement in productivity followed. In the Monts du Lyonnais, where transport was too poor for milk to be sent to Lyon, small cheese and butter factories were established.³⁵ The market, then, brought peasants into active involvement with each other and with agricultural syndicates.

Fourthly, the decline of rural weaving (except around the textile towns of the cantons of Tarare, Amplepuis and Thizy), caused many areas to revert to dependence on agriculture alone. Even around industrial Tarare communes such as Darieze and Joux returned to agriculture.³⁶ We shall see that in the interwar period most mayors were recruited from among peasant notables.³⁷

As a result of these changes peasant associative life in the mountains began to develop. A rising money income may have permitted a more diverse sociability. Those peasants who had returned from the war joined veterans' groups: according to Antoine Prost it was the *mouvement ancien combattant* which took on the role of animator of social life in the countryside during the interwar years.³⁸ In the 1920s most communes possessed running water and electricity; supplies to remote hamlets now

31 The worst affected canton, Lamure, lost 42% of its population between 1906 and 1936.

32 Garrier, op. cit., pp. 619-635. Note that in the absence of industry, except in the commune of St. Symphorien and in the Brevenne valley, these areas had never been densely populated.

33 Garrier is contradictory, insisting both on the difficulty in finding fermiers and the superiority of demand over supply of tenancies, at least in the Monts du Lyonnais, pp. 554 and 586. Barral, op.cit., pp. 191-94 on the reduction of the value of rents due to inflation. One example of an absentee landowner was Alexandre la Bâtie, mayor of Montromand and leader of the *Fédération républicaine* in the canton. He was hardly ever in Montromand, and in 1937 found that his influence in the canton had been eroded by the PSF.

34 Especially in more hospitable areas such as the Haut pays of St. Symphorien, the valleys of the Azergues, Turdine, Rhins and Trambouze, and in the northern part of the canton of Monsols.

35 Garrier, op. cit., 609-612; P. Barral, *Les Agrariens Français de Méline à Pisani*, Paris 1968, pp. 212-3: the government opposed the milk producers—mindful of the interests of 'genuine commerce'—searches at the HQ of the USE in 1926 provoked widespread annoyance.

36 About, op. cit., passim.

37 See Chapter 6.

38 A. Prost, *Les Anciens Combattants et la société française*, 3 vols., Paris, 1977, vol 2, pp. 180-213.

preoccupied the authorities. One consequence of the arrival of electricity was that peasants could listen to the radio. Little is known of the impact of radio on rural society, but it is possible that receivers in cafés formed a part of social life.

These changes should not be exaggerated. But it does seem that the isolation of mountain dwellers both from each other and from the outside world was breaking down at a time when the influence of large landowners was declining for economic reasons.

The plateau

In some respects peasant society on the plateau resembles that of the mountains. The settlement pattern was less dispersed than in the mountains, but still there were no large peasant villages to compare with those of Provence. To the north peasants typically lived in hamlets of five or six farms, situated on the steep sides of valleys. This is explained by the fractured topography, shortage of cultivatable land, abundance of sources of water and the need for shelter from the sun. Only towards the southern edge of the plateau were there larger villages.³⁹ But even here bourgs often contained a largely non-agricultural population.⁴⁰

Furthermore, all sources agree that peasants lived rather isolated lives. Farms were often surrounded by high windowless walls which, in the view of one geographer, symbolized 'the hereditary desire for isolation, the fear of involvement in the lives of others and of allowing others to interfere in their own'. He also reports that in the 1920's there was much feuding between peasants.⁴¹ Mutual aid was not unknown, but was limited to family and immediate neighbours. As in the mountains attendance at mass on Sundays remained the primary form of social life. Without attaining the levels of the mountains, church attendance remained respectable, and were clearly related to the proportion of peasants in the population. Moreover, religious life was private. It did not involve collective ceremonies or the 'chants de foule' of Alsace or Brittany.⁴²

But at this point similarity with the mountains end. Population density was much higher; communications were easier. The proximity of an urban market compensated for unfavourable agricultural conditions. A decisive turning-point in the plateau economy was the wine over-production crisis of 1907, from which time fruit began to replace wine as the principal cash crop.⁴³ Progress was halted during the war years, but between 1921 and 1931 prosperity returned as recovery was aided by state and private institutions. Even in the Bas Beaujolais, fruit began to supplant poorer

³⁹ Garrier, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-3.

⁴⁰ Guiot, *op. cit.*, p. 113: in Thurins in 1936 only 60 out of 625 inhabitants of the bourg were involved in agriculture.

⁴¹ De Farcy, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-109.

⁴² Farcy, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-40: Vaugneray: 50% for men and 60% for women. A. Pin, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁴³ André Cholley, 'Quelques Remarques sur la Culture et la Commerce des Fruits dans la Banlieue de Lyon', *ER* vol 3, 1927, pp. 83-107.; Garrier, *op. cit.*, 448-50.

quality wines.⁴⁴ At first produce had been destined primarily for Lyon, but this market was easily saturated due to ease of communication with the lower Rhône valley, and so peasants increasingly concentrated on good quality production for a wide national and international market.⁴⁵ This further encouraged specialization—Chaponost and Irigny for example concentrated on strawberries. The difficulties presented by climate, terrain and soil meant that peasants were obliged to avoid putting all their eggs in one basket.⁴⁶ Intensive monoculture was largely confined to the *grande banlieu*, an area where vegetable production by small market gardeners was also important.⁴⁷

Nonetheless, fruit production helped break down peasant isolation. Most transported their own produce to railheads or even to markets in Lyon.⁴⁸ This was particularly true of market gardeners, who were both small traders and peasants, possessed of a strong collective identity.⁴⁹ Peasants were also exposed to price fluctuations in a world market. Gilbert Garrier concludes that 'the peasant proprietor, a small producer, remains strictly subordinate to a market of which control entirely escapes him'. Heavy borrowing to finance investment in fruit production left them poorly equipped to face an economic downturn.⁵⁰

This was all the more so because on the plateau the trend towards reinforcement of medium property was uneven. In many areas subdivision of land continued unabated throughout the interwar period. This appears to have been particularly true in areas where fruit production was most profitable.⁵¹ On the other hand the same areas were also likely to experience an influx of commuters, and small peasants were most vulnerable to the advance of urban property.⁵² But some communes in close proximity to Lyon, such as Brignais, became almost entirely agricultural as the rural artisanate departed. In more westerly communes such as Messimy, however, there was both a growth in the number of medium farms and a tendency for the non-agricultural population to depart.⁵³

The point to emphasize, however, is that on all parts of the plateau the social independence of the peasantry contrasted with vulnerability to the market. In some

44 Cholley, op. cit., passim; Garrier, op. cit., p. 614.

45 Cholley, op. cit., p. 88: about one quarter of production was consumed in Lyon. Of the rest about one third was exported.

46 This was particularly true of regions more distant from Lyon, where the principal fruits, apples, pears and cherries, were less demanding of labour, and where transport was inferior. Garrier, op. cit., pp. 614-5; Cholley, op. cit., pp. 103-7.

47 R. Jeantet and J. Willemain, 'La banlieu maraîchère et la commerce des légumes à Lyon jusqu'en 1939'. ER, vol 16, 1940.

48 Cholley, op. cit., p. 84.

49 Jeantet and Willemain, op. cit. p. 250: 'Le maraîcher vit dans un monde à part, fermé. Il ne ressemble ni au paysan ni à l'ouvrier, il partage son temps entre le travail de la terre et la vie au marché. Affiné par les difficultés mêmes de son métier, il est ennemi de la routine, rendu avisé par sa condition. Sa vie garde le caractère artisanal'.

50 Garrier, op. cit., p. 614-5.

51 Farcy, op. cit., p. 73-4; Garrier, op. cit., p. 550; Guiot, op. cit., p. 25.

52 Guiot, op. cit., passim; Garrier, op. cit., p. 549.

53 Pin, op. cit., pp. 113-4. In Messimy the population fell by 17% from 1906 to 1931. Losses were mainly from the ranks of small proprietors, most of whom were also engaged in paid labour or non-agricultural activities.

circumstances this might have led to socialism. But on the plateau conservatism derived from a tradition of clerical influence over a relatively isolated peasantry. Catholic Republican notables like Aynard had grafted onto this Catholicism a democratic rhetoric which stressed the spirit of initiative of small property and presented railways as an opportunity for peasants to break into a wider market. This kind of thinking appealed especially to those medium peasants with sufficient land to be able to take advantage of new opportunities, and who saw their own Catholic values as essential to family stability, social status, and avoidance of the consequences of inheritance laws. Peasant conservatism on the plateau was an affair of Catholic medium peasants——‘bonnes familles’——of which the Parrel family in Messimy was a typical example.⁵⁴ The left, on the other hand, was associated with a (declining) rural petty bourgeoisie and small peasantry.

All of this meant that the Progressist hegemony on the plateau was dependent firstly on the goodwill of the Church, and secondly upon the maintenance of economic prosperity.

The Beaujolais

The anti-clericalism, radicalism, and even socialism of the Beaujolais peasantry contrasts sharply with the relative passivity of farmers in the mountains and even with the contented proprietors of the plateau. Here the influence of the right was confined to large landowners, their sharecropping clientele, and to medium proprietors, especially in the southernmost part of the Beaujolais where conditions were similar to those on the plateau. The Beaujolais was an area of class and cultural conflict, brilliantly satirized in Gabriel Chevallier's 1934 novel *Clochemerle*, for which the model was the village of Vaux en Beaujolais.⁵⁵ How does one account for the weakness of the right in the Beaujolais?

Firstly, contrasts in social structure were very marked. Large proprietors, sometimes bourgeois but most often aristocratic, dominated most of the Beaujolais——with the exception of the most southerly part. Many had been present for centuries; the Brac de la Perrière family had been important landowners in St. Lager since 1550. Nobles like the Comtes de Sparre, de St. Charles⁵⁶ and de Fleurieu,⁵⁷ owned perhaps half the land. Big properties were worked by paid labour or most often by sharecroppers. This system of ‘vigneronnage’ was unique to the Beaujolais and a small part of the Maconnais. It was usual for the sharecropper to supply the labour of himself and his spouse and to meet the cost of temporary workers taken on during the

⁵⁴ Pin, op. cit., pp. 30-34.

⁵⁵ G. Chevallier, *Clochemerle*, Paris, 1934. The newspaper *Lyon républicain* was obliged to inform its readers that *Clochemerle* did not recount real events.

⁵⁶ Of St. Etienne les Ollières.

⁵⁷ The Comte de Fleurieu owned land in Villefranche, Arnas, Anse and St. Georges de Reneins. In 1914 he had been the most important landowner in the department.

vintage. Customarily his expenses were raised further by the whole of the cost of minor equipment, by his duty to pay half the cost of hay and straw and the necessity to purchase food not produced by himself. Theoretically, his only income was from the sale of half the wine produced.⁵⁸

Proprietors saw *vigneronnage* as a perfect example of class collaboration, lauding the sharecropper for his freedom from the servitude of the worker, his willingness to have his say, and his courtesy to his 'monsieur'.⁵⁹ Gilbert Garrier shows, however, that in the nineteenth century the position of sharecroppers was of strict dependence. They were caught in a vicious circle of debt by the practice common to most proprietors of advancing cash at the beginning of each year, whilst poverty forced sale of wine at the moment when prices were at their lowest. Sharecroppers were subject to daily surveillance.⁶⁰

Yet as in the case of tenant farmers in the mountains dependence was dissolving in the 1920's, thanks to growing difficulty in finding *vignerons*. Consequently proprietors were forced to accord advantages to them. The obligation to pay a fixed due for the use of pasture was reduced and in bad years waived; premiums for accident and hail insurance were taken on by the proprietor; hay and straw were paid for by the proprietor alone, wages were paid for days spent planting new vines and permission was often granted to cultivate an orchard.⁶¹ Also, it is probable that inflation had permitted sharecroppers to rid themselves of debts.⁶² Finally contemporaries noted a tendency towards the absenteeism of some proprietors. It was said that such landlords had sufficient income from other sources not to worry about the excessive demands of sharecroppers, which put less fortunate proprietors in a difficult position.⁶³ Growing economic independence was, then, one of the reasons for the advance of socialism in the Beaujolais in the 1920s.

A more long-standing aspect of political conflict in the Beaujolais was the opposition of small independent wine producers to the axis of noble and curé—the type of conflict described by Gabriel Chevallier. Many small growers owned no more than a single hectare, and few had as many as four. Many laboured on the holdings of the more fortunate. It is noticeable that although there were independent winegrowers all over the Beaujolais, they leaned towards the left only in those areas where they lived in close proximity to the aristocracy.

Another factor which divided small growers from large was the development of commercial winegrowing, that had been accentuated since the days of the phyllox-

58 Jacques Burel, 'La Vignoble Beaujolais', *Thèse de Droit*, Lyon 1941; Raymond Billiard, *Vigneronnage et Vigneron Beaujolais*, Villefranche 1938; Garrier, op. cit., p. 268

59 Billiard, op. cit., p. 32-3.

60 Garrier, op. cit., pp. 268-9 and 390-1. Note also that if *vigneronnage* permitted the survival of certain feudal traditions, it remained a capitalist form of agriculture.

61 Billiard, op. cit., passim; Garrier, op. cit., pp. 584-5.

62 R. Estier, review of Garrier.

63 Burel, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

era crisis.⁶⁴ The vine lost its importance in areas of polyculture and was increasingly concentrated in a few communes on the banks of the Rhône and above all in the Beaujolais.⁶⁵ Monoculture was accompanied by a tendency towards mass production from high yield hybrid vines rather than the gamay for which the Beaujolais was famous. Big growers in particular sought to repair the neglect of the war years by planting high production varieties with a view to an immediate profit. Small independent producers were worse affected by absence and death during the war, but did not have the capital necessary for re-planting with hybrids. Many were forced to abandon the land. Those who adapted best were concentrated in areas where quality of wine was good enough to maintain profit levels—mainly the north. Small growers tended therefore to accuse the large of exploiting the Beaujolais name in order to sell inferior products.⁶⁶ Like the fruit growers of the plateau, small *viticulteurs* were obliged to sell their wine immediately after the vintage, when prices were at their lowest.⁶⁷ During the downturn which began in the late 1920s such producers turned to co-operatives.⁶⁸

One reason for this was a tradition of association among winegrowers. The pattern of settlement in the Beaujolais viticole is as dispersed as in many other areas of the department, with a predominance of large hamlets. In the Haut Beaujolais a handful of sharecropper cottages often surrounded the residence of a noble or bourgeois proprietor. But social life was richer. *Viticulteurs* were never far apart and communication was easy. Market production had long accustomed winegrowers to contact with the outside world. The town of Villefranche was a source of new ideas. Contemporaries saw Beaujolais winegrowers as characterized by a mixture of conviviality, honest independence and egalitarianism, ever-ready to co-operate in the search for solutions to the multitude of problems with which winegrowers were afflicted.⁶⁹

A combination of subjection to the market, sociability and an historic opposition to aristocracy and Church explains the radical sympathies of small Beaujolais winegrowers. The right did well in two kinds of areas. Firstly in the southern part of the Beaujolais, especially the canton of Anse. Here the rural exodus and the decline of

64 Garrier, op. cit., pp. 417-442: large proprietors used their capital resources to reconstitute their vines at an early date, and concentrated on quantity rather than quality.

65 During the interwar years the amount of land devoted to the vine in the Rhône fell continuously from its peak in 1902, while the number of those declaring a harvest fell to a proportionately even greater extent. The proportion of land occupied by the vine in the southern part of the Rhône declined from 25% in 1912 to between 10 and 15% in 1929. Garrier, op. cit., pp. 595-6.

66 Garrier, op. cit., pp. 603-4 and 550n.

67 Burel, op. cit., pp. 37-9.

68 A. Perrin, 'Le Mont d'Or lyonnais et ses Abords', ER, vol 2, 1927, pp. 55-81. Garrier, op. cit., p. 598-9.

69 H. Lagardette, *Impressions Beaujolais: de la résistance à la vigne*, Lyon, 1931: l'influence de l'unique boisson, le vin, se marque sur le caractère sociable de ses habitants. Il rapproche les distances entre les hommes et éveille la franchise. Le vigneron aime l'égalité et l'indépendance, fuit les chicanes et se montre respectueux de la parole donnée'. Similarly, A. Perrin, op. cit., p. 6, wrote that the winegrower 'à l'habitude de réunions où l'on cherche des parades contre les fléaux de la vigne; à l'apparition de la pyrale, de l'oidium il en fut ainsi'.

small in favour of medium property most pronounced;⁷⁰ large domains were few, and monoculture of the vine less developed. Conditions were not dissimilar to those on the plateau, and peasant conservatism was just as conditional. Secondly, the right retained the support of a dwindling number of sharecroppers.

Agricultural Syndicalism

The *Union du Sud-Est*: from counterrevolution to pressure group

The *Union du Sud-est des Syndicats Agricoles* (USE) was officially constituted in October 1888. The initiative came from two large proprietors in the Beaujolais, the Comte de St. Victor and Emile Dupont, both of whom had Legitimist backgrounds. Their aim was to defend Catholic and hierarchical conception of rural society. All those engaged in agriculture, regardless of class, would combine in a corporate defence of rural interests. The mark of paternalist Beaujolais landowners is evident, and not surprisingly Republicans denounced a rebirth of feudalism. But in fact the foundation of the USE implied a recognition that the quasi-feudal ties of *vigneronnage* were insufficient to win mass support in the age of democracy. Rather than attempt to win the allegiance of the peasantry through direct political pressure, the aim was to reach them through the provision of material services. Thus the first progress of the Union coincided with the phylloxera crisis.⁷¹

After the war the USE continued to expand.⁷² In 1935 there were 1,900 syndicates and 183,500 subscribers to its journal in the south-east. Of these the Rhône accounted for respectively 112 syndicates and 17,824 members spread across most of the department.⁷³ The only competitor of any importance was the *Fédération des syndicats de défense viticole du Bas Beaujolais*, presided by the Radical-Socialist senator Emile Bender, a reflection of political conflict in the Beaujolais.

Large proprietors remained prominent in the leadership of the USE. Representing the department of the Rhône were members of noble families such as André Brac de la Perrière, the Comte de St. Victor and the Comte de Leusse.⁷⁴ All three were from families which regularly appeared in the subscription lists of the local journal of *Action française*. Yet after the war the USE appears to have undergone fundamental changes as it inserted itself into a new system of corporate representation. Its function was now to lobby for concessions within the Republic; therefore the USE's anti-republicanism was muted.

⁷⁰ Garrier, *op. cit.*, pp. 549-50 and 550n.

⁷¹ Gilbert Garrier, 'L'Union de Sud-est des Syndicats Agricoles avant 1914', MS, 1969; Garrier, *op. cit.* pp. 518-522; Barral, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-13. Membership rose to about 120 000 in 1914, organized in 500 syndicates in ten departments.

⁷² In the Vaucluse a similar organization suffered between the wars from the competition of specialist groups, a consequence of the advance of market agriculture. Claude Mesliand, 'Le Syndicat Agricole Vauclusien', MS, 67, 1969, pp. 39-60.

⁷³ *Annuaire de l'Union du Sud-est des Syndicats Agricoles*, 1936.

⁷⁴ Much of the biographical information that follows is from Gerard Gayet, 'L'Union de Sud-est des Syndicats Agricoles', *mémoire de maîtrise*, Lyon II, 1972; the rest is from my own files of political militants.

This can be seen in the leadership of the USE. Alongside nobles were bourgeois proprietors such as Vice-president Julien Riboud, who owned 200 hectares in the canton of Monsols, as well as vines in the Haut Beaujolais. He was the son of a banker.⁷⁵ What is more, Riboud possessed impeccable Republican credentials. His father had been a part of the Aynard circle, and remained a director of the Aynard family bank. A more ambiguous figure was Felix Garcin, President of the USE since 1923. He was linked to the founding milieu of the syndicate because he combined a professorship of political economy at the Catholic University with the presidency of the board of the *Nouvelliste*.⁷⁶ Yet Garcin also maintained cordial relations with the *Alliance démocratique* politician André Tardieu. Julien Riboud was also a member of that party, as well as of the *Fédération républicaine*.⁷⁷

Contacts with politicians of the centre right, who were more or less permanently in government, were the key to the USE's success as a pressure group. In the 1920s the USE operated more or less independently, cultivating its links with local deputies, but was most influential when Tardieu was Minister of Agriculture in 1929 and 1930. A pragmatic alliance with centre right and centre left politicians was typical of interest groups between the wars.

The USE's near monopoly of agricultural syndicalism in the Rhône also meant that it was able to make use of official bodies created in the 1920s. Thus the *Conseil général*, although in the hands of the left, had to award the presidency of the Departmental Agricultural Office (created in 1919),⁷⁸ to a moderate conservative *conseiller général* who played a secondary role in the USE. Of greater significance was the USE's domination of the Rhône Chamber of Agriculture, set up in 1927. It was elected partly by direct suffrage, and partly by syndicates. The USE possessed 658 out of 770 mandates in the syndical college. Direct elections were always uncontested, for the USE put forward joint lists with pro-Radical bodies. Nonetheless, most Chamber personnel were drawn from the USE. President of the Rhône Chamber from 1933 was Julien Riboud. The need to conciliate Radical peasants was perhaps one reason for the eclipse of aristocratic leadership.⁷⁹ Control of the Chamber conferred upon the USE both economic and political advantages. It enabled the USE to channel government money to farmers. It also reinforced its legitimacy.⁸⁰

75 Two other examples were Claude Sylvestre, who owned a medium-sized property at Bois d'Oingt, and a large fortune obtained in the fertiliser industry, and Pierre Gonnard of Fontaines St. Martin, who possessed 240 hectares in addition to his industrial wealth.

76 Garcin had come into the possession of a large property in the Loire on his marriage. He was also director of a silk company, S.A Joseph Dubost.

77 Gayet, *op.cit.*, pp. 92-145, reports that in 1931 Garcin was offered the Agriculture Ministry by Tardieu.

78 Barral, *op. cit.*, p. 209. These organisms competed with the reformed Chambers of Agriculture, and were suppressed in 1935. Michel Augé-Laribé, *La Politique agricole de la France*, Paris, 1942, sees them as an attempt by the administration to fend off demands, chiefly from the right, for elected *Chambers of Agriculture*.

79 Charles Gallet of the *Alliance démocratique* was also a member of the Chamber.

80 Gayet, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-123.

The shift of the USE from counterrevolution to pressure group can also be seen in the USE's economic liberalism. It appealed to the social Catholicism of La Tour du Pin, but its conception of 'mutual aid' went no further than insurance against fire and bad weather.⁸¹ Only under pressure from the rank and file in the 1930s did the USE adopt a more genuine corporatism.⁸² In financial and economic policy the only exception to liberal principles was protectionism. The USE had no truck with the interventionist agricultural policy of the Radicals and socialists. The USE then owed much to the Orleanist tradition. Whereas Riboud adhered to the 'libéralisme aménagé' of the Progressists, Garcin owed more to the curious blend of liberalism and integristism preached by *le Nouvelliste*.⁸³

We have seen that this kind of ideology was an effective means of integrating the peasantry. It also seems to have been accepted for pragmatic reasons by the mainly aristocratic landowners who had founded the USE, though they remained royalists malcontents at heart. But by the end of the 1920s the liberal leadership of the USE was under pressure. In the first place the USE *could* be seen as representing of a narrow group of big farmers, a group which did well out of the market system, and with increasingly tenuous links to the countryside. An enormous paper membership was used merely to legitimize lobbying activities. The only contact of the rank and file with the syndicate was through the co-operative fertiliser depot in the *chef-lieu* of the canton. There was, then, a potential gap between the USE and its members. The USE leadership found it difficult to bridge this gap because whilst it was obliged to invoke the mass of the peasantry in support of its demands, it feared both a self-conscious peasant movement and the interventionist measures proposed by Radical spokesmen of the peasantry.⁸⁴ The equivocal attitude of the USE towards the peasantry is best seen in its relations with the JAC.

The Jeunesse agricole chrétienne

Although the JAC was one of the first authentically peasant movements in France, the initiative for its creation came from outside rural society. It was a distant result of the *Ralliement*. Before 1914 rural study groups had grown out of the *Chronique sociale de Lyon*. The *Chronique* in turn was a social Catholic organization which had emerged from the anti-semitic and nationalist Christian democracy of the 1890s and which had subsequently moved towards the moderate right.⁸⁵ The study groups num-

⁸¹ According to its *Annuaire* there were 1,389 mutual aid societies affiliated to the USE in the Rhône in 1936.

⁸² *Croix du Rhône*, 12-4-1936: JAC propagandists appealed to the corporatism of founders like Gaillard-Bancel against the commercial attitudes of the current USE leadership.

⁸³ Gayet, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

⁸⁴ For a similar argument see S. Berger, *op. cit.*, *passim*. She argues that the aim of the *Office centrale* was to protect the peasantry from unhealthy influences and to prevent the emergence of rival peasant organizations by assuming the task of mediating between the state and rural society.

Mesliand *op. cit.*, suggests that the Vaucluse union drew together so many aspects of rural life that it managed to convince peasants that they were in some sense isolated from the nation, and thus mask social cleavages.

⁸⁵ See Chapters 1 and 2; Joseph Folliet, *Notre Ami, Marius Gonin*, Lyon, 1944, pp. 213-6; Ponson, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

bered less than a dozen before 1914, but already they represented an implicit challenge to the rural hierarchy.⁸⁶ After the war the movement progressed, and in 1929 was integrated into the *Jeunesse agricole chrétienne*, one of a number of specialist movements designed to end the decline of Catholicism by making contact with workers and peasants in their own 'milieu'.⁸⁷

The JAC was also encouraged by the hierarchy, which ensured close clerical encadrement. Catholic elites also patronized the JAC, just as they had the older rural study groups. Leaders of the USE, including Garcin himself, frequently gave talks to JAC groups.⁸⁸ Thanks to the sponsorship of Julien Riboud, Jean-Marie Parrel, who was closely linked to the JAC, became the first authentic peasant to join the ruling circles of the USE.⁸⁹ The USE leadership sponsored the JAC in order to contain it, and seems to have attempted to confine it to religious activities. But the anti-liberal JAC gained a momentum of its own, developing in ways which often horrified the elites.

Total membership figures are unknown. Those given by the press were contradictory: 600 subscribers to the JAC press were reported in September 1931, but only 150 members in the department one year later.⁹⁰ By 1937 there were probably forty sections in the Rhône.⁹¹ Although not numerically strong, the *Jacistes* were sure of an audience out of proportion to their numbers, for the columns of the widely-read *Croix du Rhône* were open to them. They also enjoyed the support of many of the clergy.⁹²

The JAC were led by a group which was a little set apart from the peasant masses. The first president of the Rhône federation was Claudius Delorme. His father combined the profession of surveyor with running the family farm,⁹³ and was a relative of the local *Fédération* deputy Jean-Baptiste Delorme, also a prosperous working farmer. In other words Claudius Delorme issued from a prominent example of the Catholic and conservative 'bonnes familles' of the plateau. Young Claudius was educated at the Ecole Sandar, a Catholic agricultural college of which the staff were proponents of social Catholic ideas. In 1939 he came into possession of a few hectares at St. Laurent d'Agny.

From a rather different background was Delorme's successor in 1934, Joseph Bosse-Platière. The latter's father, Alexandre, was a leading militant of the *Fédéra-*

86 These study groups aimed to 'rendre au paysan la confiance en lui-même', and to put an end to the sense of inferiority with regard to the towns, through the creation of a peasant elite.

87 Folliet, op. cit., pp. 216; Adrien Dansette, *Destin du catholicisme français, 1926-1956*, Paris, 1957; J.M. Leuwers, 'Étapes de l'action des laïcs et conceptions successives de l'apostolat du laïc', in P. Barrau, et al., *Évangélisation collective*, Paris, 1964.

88 *Le Nouvelliste*, 4-5-1930.

89 Pin, op. cit., passim.

90 *Le Petit Montagnard de Tarare*, 6-9-1931 and 18-9-1932.

91 *Nouvelliste*, 23-5-1937.

92 Probably less from parish priests than from certain brotherhoods: e.g. teaching orders at the Ecole Sandar.

93 The profession of *géomètre* was not in this period one of high status.

tion républicaine in the Beaujolais. Bosse-Platière senior was a prosperous wine-grower and ex-army officer.⁹⁴ Further research would be needed to test the point, but it is possible that Bosse-Platière's succession represented a shift to the right in the JAC, perhaps imposed by the hierarchy, for he tended to emphasize more than Delorme the religious aims of the movement.⁹⁵ Alexandre Bosse-Platière enjoyed close relations with the agricultural elites of the Beaujolais, so the presence of his son also illustrates the dynamic of manipulation from above and pressure from below of which the JAC was a product.

There can be little doubt that the JAC rank and file were genuine peasants. Map 3.8, which plots the communes of residence of delegates to the 1931 departmental congress, shows that the movement was at first confined to the plateau. Some were from communes such as Brignais and Chaponost which specialized in the intensive production of fruit. Others, like Caluire et Cuire, were zones of market gardening, for which from 1933 there was a specialist section.⁹⁶ These communes were all dominated by peasant proprietors.⁹⁷ It is also significant that two mountain communes sent delegates to the congress—Brullioles and St. Genis l'Argentière. In the years which followed the JAC expanded further into the mountains and the southernmost part of the Beaujolais. In all these areas the loyalty of the peasantry to notables had, for different reasons, been highly conditional. Significantly there was no sign of JAC activity in any but the southernmost part of the Beaujolais. In the rest of this area landowners dominated what was left of conservatism, while opposition to them was monopolized by the anti-clerical left rather than partially contained within the right. The JAC can then be seen as a part of a crisis of notable politics on the right.

This is confirmed by ideology of the JAC. The emphasis of *Action catholique* on proselytization in the milieu where the individual Christian found himself, could be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand Joseph Bosse-Platière stressed re-Christianization. By living their Christianity in their daily lives, by acting in fields, markets, festivals and syndicates as they would on Sundays, *Jacistes* would 'insensibly lead the masses back to the Church'.⁹⁸ On the other hand, greater emphasis could be placed on Christian solutions to the practical problems which confronted peasants. This too was conceived as a means to re-Christianization. Yet in the action of someone like Claudius Delorme there was a slippage from re-Christianization to the more secular goal of creating a peasant elite. This elite would have the task of regenerating an agricultural syndicalism which had degenerated into a merely commercial affair.

⁹⁴ A measure of his wealth is that the fortune of his wife permitted him to purchase a majority of shares in a local newspaper, the *Reveil du Beaujolais*, in 1941.

⁹⁵ *Croix du Rhône*, 31-3-1935.

⁹⁶ *Le Nouvelliste*, 22-3-1933.

⁹⁷ On the electoral lists of the *Chambres d'Agriculture* the twenty communes that sent delegates to the 1931 congress of the JAC had on average 79% of proprietors, compared to 72% in the department as a whole. *Nouvel-liste*, 2-9-1930.

⁹⁸ *Croix de Rhône*, 31-3-1935.

The regenerated syndicate would take more account of peasant interests, for it would form the nucleus of a new organization 'qui repartira plus équitablement la production et la consommation, le travail et les bénéfices'.⁹⁹

The elites of the USE were then suspicious of the JAC both on social and religious grounds.¹⁰⁰ It is true that starting out from an integrist conception of Catholicism which attacked the separation by liberals of religion and daily life, the JAC ended up with a quasi-secular position. In this way the JAC and other social Catholic movements prepared the way for the *Croix de Feu*, the first important conservative party in the Rhône to claim to stand above the religious divide. Yet the secularism of the JAC had very narrow limits. The movement remained organizationally and ideologically dependent upon the Church, and was perceived to be so by its opponents. This helps to explain why the social critique of the JAC was contained within the right.

This can be illustrated by looking at a key figure in the ascension of the JAC. Jean-Marie Parrel, aged 52 in 1933, shared many of the ideas of the *Jacistes*, of which a group flourished in his own commune of Messimy. He possessed about ten hectares—a considerable farm on the plateau—which he worked himself. In 1932 Parrel took over from the late Régis Rambaud, director of the *Nouvelliste*, as President of the cantonal syndicate of Vaugneray. In his inaugural speech he recognized that he had neither the culture nor the notoriety of his predecessor, but felt that he had at least, 'l'avantage d'être plus près de vous, d'être l'un des vôtres'. He immediately set about the formation of communal sections of the USE, with the aim of involving peasants more directly in syndical activities. In 1936 Parrel became a vice-president of USE.¹⁰¹ Yet Parrel, was also a *conseiller général* and member of the bureau of the *Fédération républicaine* in the Rhône. His debt to the Catholic and liberal values of the Progressism of the 'bonnes familles' of the plateau, is evident even in his corporatism. He saw in it a means of protecting the family, its savings, and the spirit of initiative which characterized small property, against the industrial methods of large scale farmers.¹⁰² Parrel remained faithful to the *Fédération républicaine*, but in the longer term the JAC also fed into the *Croix de Feu*.

Conclusion

Three conclusions can be retained from this discussion of the erosion of the Progressist hegemony on the right in the countryside of the Rhône. First, the JAC is an index of the decline of notable politics in the countryside, and of an associated critique of liberalism.

⁹⁹ *Croix de Rhône*, 12-14-1936.

¹⁰⁰ Gayet, op. cit., pp. 75-7. Garcin, for example, criticized the JAC for preaching against the fourth commandment.

¹⁰¹ Pin, op. cit., pp. 63-84.

¹⁰² *L'Union républicaine*, 31-3-1935.

Second, the emergence of the JAC provides an example of the inseparability of religion, economics and class conflict in interwar France.¹⁰³ It shows how difficult it was in interwar France for political movements to break out of the ideological and political legacy of the Church-State conflict. As a Catholic Jean-Marie Parrel was unable to see peasant socialists as allies, even though both corporatism and co-operatives represented attempts to deal with the helplessness of the peasantry in a market economy. On the contrary, Parrel attributed the decline of the peasantry to the spread of lay values. This illustrates again how difficult it was for conservatives, although conscious of the need for unity against socialism, to break free from a divisive set of ideological references. Furthermore, the JAC shows that religion was not simply a tool of conservatives.

Third, the transformation of the USE into a pressure group and the emergence of the JAC were part of corporatization of French politics. The agricultural interest began to entrench itself within the state apparatus just at a time when those interested in rapid economic expansion were beginning to criticize what they saw as the out-moded structures of French society. Neither this nor the fracturing of interest group politics by the religious question augured well for the stability of the regime.

¹⁰³ This implies rejection of P. Barral's argument that tensions within rural society were subordinate to 'une revendication globale dirigée contre la domination de l'industrie urbaine' (Barral, op. cit., p. 14). Rather, as Philippe Gratton argues, we have seen that peasants were potentially divided by class conflicts which they often experienced only indirectly through the market (P. Gratton, *Les Paysans contre l'agrairisme*, Paris, 1972).

Chapter four

Change in urban society

Pierre Drieu la Rochelle chose Lyon, 'the most inhospitable town in France', as an appropriate setting for one of his periodic bouts of suicidal self-obsession.¹ For Henri Béraud Lyon was a town where avarice ruled and where wealth borrowed the visage of misery in order to disguise itself. 'Chez nous', he continued, 'rien ne change, ni le ciel, ni la pierre, ni les âmes'.² Writers of greater and lesser talent portrayed Lyon as a city of individualism, secrecy, materialism and fear of the covetousness of others.³ Contemporaries either took the Lyonnais character as given or more often explained it in terms of the city's commercial vocation.

Certainly the liberal tradition of the Lyonnais right can be analysed as a material fact to the extent that historical actors believed it to be real. Yet we have seen that the Girondin tradition was deliberately manipulated, even invented, by men like Edouard Aynard. Neither was liberal individualism the only tradition in Lyon, even within the bourgeoisie or the manufacturing class itself. Indeed, there was more than one variety of liberalism. In other words, there is no *necessary* connection between commerce and liberalism. It is an historical relationship, of which the genesis, transmission and dissolution must be explained.

In this chapter we shall see how a variety of liberal individualism, associated with the most successful elements of the silk industry, remained dominant into the early 1930s. This will lead us into business institutions such as the Chamber of Commerce and their ideologies. We shall also see once more the importance of Catholicism to elite self-definition and to the incorporation of white collar workers into the right. It will be shown how the liberal consensus was undermined by the development of large scale capitalism and a reaction from businessmen in older sections of the economy. Meanwhile, formation of the CFTC showed that liberalism was losing its grip on the masses. To orientate the reader it will first be necessary to introduce the political and social structures of urban society in the Rhône.

Social Space, Political Space

Thanks to the work of Jean-Luc Pinol it is possible to divide the city into four types of social space according to the occupations of its electors in 1936 (see Map 4.1).⁴ Type

¹ Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, *Secret Journal and Other Writings*, Cambridge, 1973, pp. 14-15.

² Henri Béraud, *Ciel de suie*, Paris, 1933, p. 1.

³ A. Demaison, 'Visites à la Presse de Province (V), Bourgogne et Région Lyonnais', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15-10-1929. 'A Lyon les jardins sont clos de hauts murs comme les âmes, mais derrière les façades sans caractère que de splendeurs se dévoilent à ceux qui parviennent dans ces refuges intimes. Même la foi religieuse ne se manifeste qu'avec une discrétion qui n'a d'égal que sa profondeur'.

⁴ J.-L. Pinol, *Espace Sociale et espace politique: Lyon à l'époque du Front Populaire*, Lyon, 1980, pp. 104-110. The method used was hierarchical cluster analysis, described in the previous chapter. Four suburban com-

three is characterized by the strong presence of workers. It includes four suburban communes, (not shown on the map)—Vénissieux, Oullins, St. Fons and Pierre Bénite; all but one polling district of Villeurbanne; the northern part of the 5th arrondissement (Vaise), and much of the 3rd and 7th. Often the proportion of workers in the electorate was extremely high, reaching 80% of the adult male population in Vénissieux in 1931.⁵

In type two there is no clear predominance of any social group, though white collar workers and artisans are somewhat overrepresented. It includes the Croix Rousse and parts of the left bank of the Rhône, where it forms a transition between the space of the workers and that of the ruling class. The situation is complicated by type four, which is marked by overrepresentation of non-manual employees of rail and tram companies, and sometimes also of postmen. In these districts both the ruling classes and the private sector salariat are under-represented. Socially the districts of type four belong either with working class or unsegregated areas. So the tripartite division of space is not really disrupted.

The ruling classes are concentrated chiefly in the centre of the city: in the Presqu'île from Perrache in the south to the Terreaux in the North; along the quais of the Rhône, especially in the 6th Arrondissement, and on the Boulevard des Belges, bordering the Parc de la Tête d'Or (also in the 6th). Elites are also well-represented in the Point du Jour (5th Arrondissement), and in the suburban communes of the west such as Ecully. The ruling class dominates certain *quartiers*: in district 201 it constitutes 25% of the electorate.⁶ The remainder of the population in wealthy districts consists of categories closely linked to them: clergy, students, higher grade white collar workers, and middle managers.

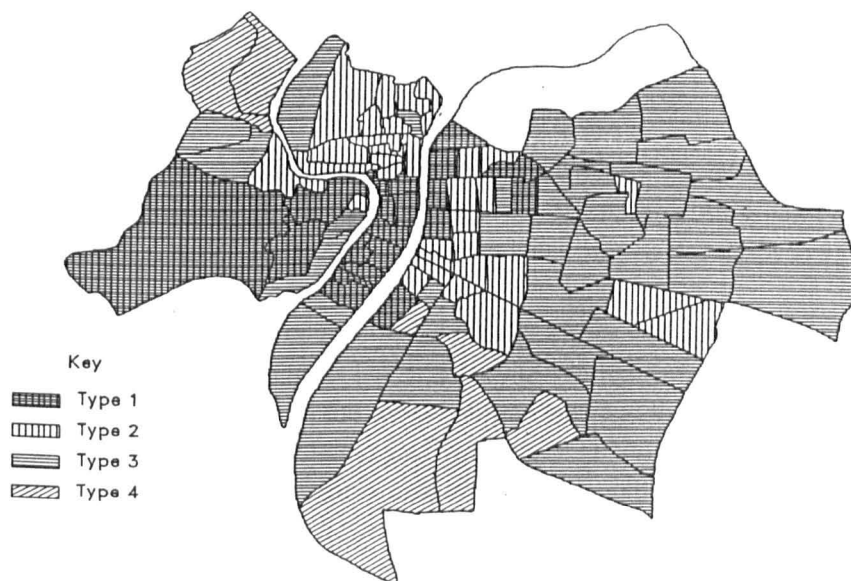
Broadly speaking this tripartite division of social space coincides with voting behaviour in the city. Map 4.2 summarizes J-L. Pinol's 'typologies of political orientations'. The conservative vote is dominant in types six and seven, which cover the presqu'île north of Perrache railway station, and the 6th arrondissement, particularly along the quais, bordering the Parc de la Tête d'Or, and in the more recently developed area of the Gare des Brotteaux (district 602). J-L. Pinol also distinguishes two areas in which a greater than average conservative vote was accompanied by overrepresentation of other parties: the Radicals in Herriot's 1st arrondissement (type five), and the socialists in the southern part of the 5th (type 3). These are all areas where the ruling class was overrepresented.

munes—Bron, Vaulx en Velin, Ste. Foy les Lyon and Pierre Benite—all characterized by an over-representation of farmers, do not fall into these categories.

⁵ Videlier, op. cit.; M. Bonneville, *Naissance et métamorphose d'une banlieue ouvrière: Villeurbanne. Processus et formes d'urbanisation*, Lyon, 1978, p. 63: were foreigners to be taken into account the proportion of workers in the districts of Villeurbanne would vary from 75 to 85%.

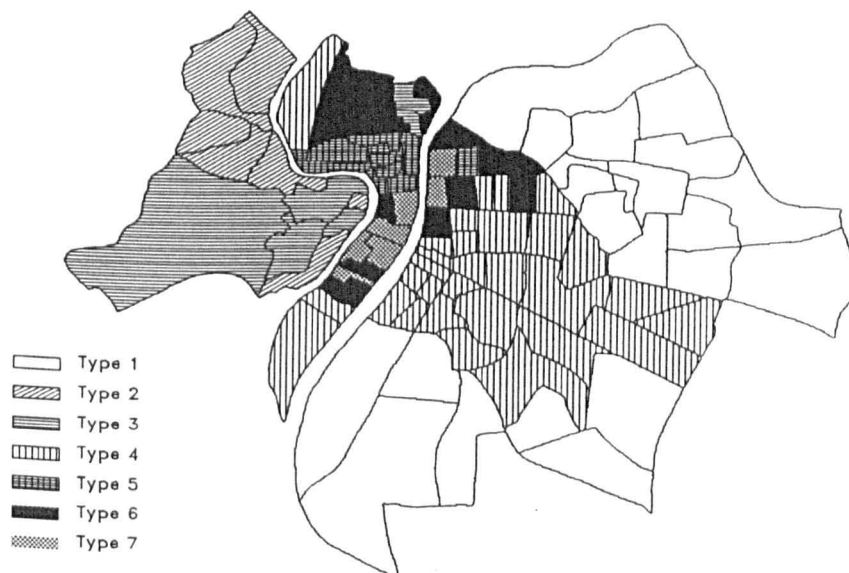
⁶ Against less than 3% of the electorate in the Agglomeration as a whole.

Social Space in Lyon and Villeurbanne
1936



Map 3.1

Typology of Political Orientations
Lyon and Villeurbanne 1936



Map 3.2

The exception is an area of right wing predominance in the socially mixed Croix-Rousse (4th arrondissement, type six). This is partly due to J-L. Pinol's choice of 1936 for his analysis, for in that year many Radicals voted for a conservative candidate put forward by a group of small traders.⁷ Nevertheless, conservatism was historically stronger in the Croix Rousse than in other areas. The probable explanation is greater religious practice. In the Croix Rousse the parish network was much better established than in areas with a similar social mix on the left bank of the Rhône. In the latter case the urbanization of the late nineteenth century had run ahead of the Church's capacity to adapt. In fact, Catholicism was as important to voting behaviour in the city as in the countryside.

Type four covers areas in which the scores of all parties, except for a small overrepresentation of the Radicals, were close to their average in the Agglomeration as a whole, that is most of the 3rd arrondissement and the northern part of the 7th. Finally, the right did badly in the socialist bastion of Vaise (type two), and the communist strongholds in the southern part of the 7th arrondissement, Villeurbanne, and the eastern suburbs of St. Fons, Bron and Vénissieux, not shown on the map (type one).

These generally unsurprising patterns are confirmed by J-L. Pinol's analysis of political and social variables, which shows a relationship between the conservative vote and the presence of the ruling classes and higher grade white collar workers. There is also a relationship between the conservative vote and the presence of older electors and those born in towns or cities. *Quartier* plays a significant role in that political polarization is less marked in socially mixed areas. But place occupied in the social hierarchy is the most important factor.⁸

Social and political polarization was then a marked feature of the Lyonnais conurbation. The explosion of the *banlieu* between the wars kept alive bourgeois fears of proletarian insurrection. Suburbs such as Vénissieux were seen almost as foreign countries.⁹ Such sentiments were reinforced by the crowding together of immigrants in conditions of indescribable poverty.¹⁰ Conservatives were apt to regard demonstrations by the left in the centre of the city as a species of barbarian invasion—'les apaches venus de la banlieu'. This must be borne in mind if we are to understand the quasi-militarization of bourgeois districts by the *Croix de Feu* and PSF.

⁷ The conservative vote in the 4th rose from 25% in 1932 to 36% in 1936. The right wing vote in the northern part of the 7th arrondissement, on the other hand, is lower than it might otherwise have been. This is because the sitting Radical deputy Paul Richard was one of only three radical parliamentarians to openly oppose the Popular Front.

⁸ Pinol, *Espace sociale*, pp. 125-52. I also carried out an analysis of changes over time in the conservative vote, but this revealed little of interest. Right wing support was being slowly eroded in its old bastions of the Peninsula and 5th arrondissement, and increasing in the newer quarters on the left bank of the Rhône. This was essentially a function of a decline in social segregation within the commune of Lyon, as proletarian suburbs expanded.

⁹ Indeed, the commune was all but cut off from Lyon by the inadequacy of public transport.

¹⁰ Videlier, *op. cit. passim*; Pierre Léon's study of bequests shows that in the context of a modest improvement in the wealth of society as a whole, the gap between rich and poor steadily increased until 1914. Qualitative evidence suggests that the same trend continued into the 1930s. *Géographie des fortunes et des structures sociales à Lyon au XIXe siècle (1815-1914)*. Lyon, 1969.

But the fact of polarization must be qualified in two ways. First, within the commune of Lyon there were significant areas which were socially unsegregated. This helps to explain the historical strength of Radicalism in the city, symbolized by the long occupation of the Mayoralty by Edouard Herriot. It was the aim of all conservative movements to incorporate this social and political middle ground.

Second, the homogeneity of bourgeois districts should not be exaggerated. In the interwar years much was made of a cultural and political opposition between the peninsula and the Brotteaux. Jean Dufourt's satirical novel *Calixte* tells the story of the efforts of a young Parisian, Philippe Lavrignais, to penetrate the salons of the Lyonnais elites. In the first chapter Dufourt opposes Ainay, 'un dédale de ruelles et de petites places de bien pauvre mine', with the rectangular pattern of 'larges avenues plantées d'arbres, de coquets hôtels particuliers, de riantes squares'¹¹ of the left bank.¹² For some contemporaries this contrast symbolized the triumph of progressive capitalism over the obscurantism of the old bourgeoisie. Philippe's mentor, the eponymous hero of the novel, allows that many of the best families live in the Brotteaux, 'Mais je ne vous cacherai pas qu'elle y est plus mêlée qu'à Ainay, que les mœurs sont moins pures et qu'elle a une tendance fâcheuse à s'écarter des traditions'.¹³ In a similar vein a Parisian journalist wrote in 1929 that 'les Brotteaux se sont dressés en face de la presqu'île, l'unité, c'est un peu disloqué'.¹⁴

These observers were not entirely mistaken. In the last decades of the previous century there had been an exodus of wealthy bourgeois, reputedly the younger and more dynamic, from the presqu'île towards the newly urbanized Brotteaux.¹⁵ In 1936 the Brotteaux remained the preferred residence of industrialists, engineers and senior managers. The old bourgeoisie of rentiers, traders and merchant manufacturers, were more likely to be found in the older quarters of the centre.¹⁶ Here they rubbed shoulders with what remained of nobility. This is shown by Map 4.4, which plots the places of residence of the 128 noble households listed in the 1936 edition of the *Annuaire Tout-Lyon*. Over half of aristocratic families still lived in their traditional *quartier* between Place Bellecour and Ainay.¹⁷ Certain of the western suburbs,

11 The use of the English 'squares' is a reference to the Anglophilia of the liberal elites of the Brotteaux.

12 Dufourt, op. cit., pp. 19-22. Note, however, that the pattern of streets in the peninsula is hardly less rectangular—having been redeveloped by prefect Vaisse during the Second Empire. But its architecture was on a considerably smaller scale than that of the Brotteaux.

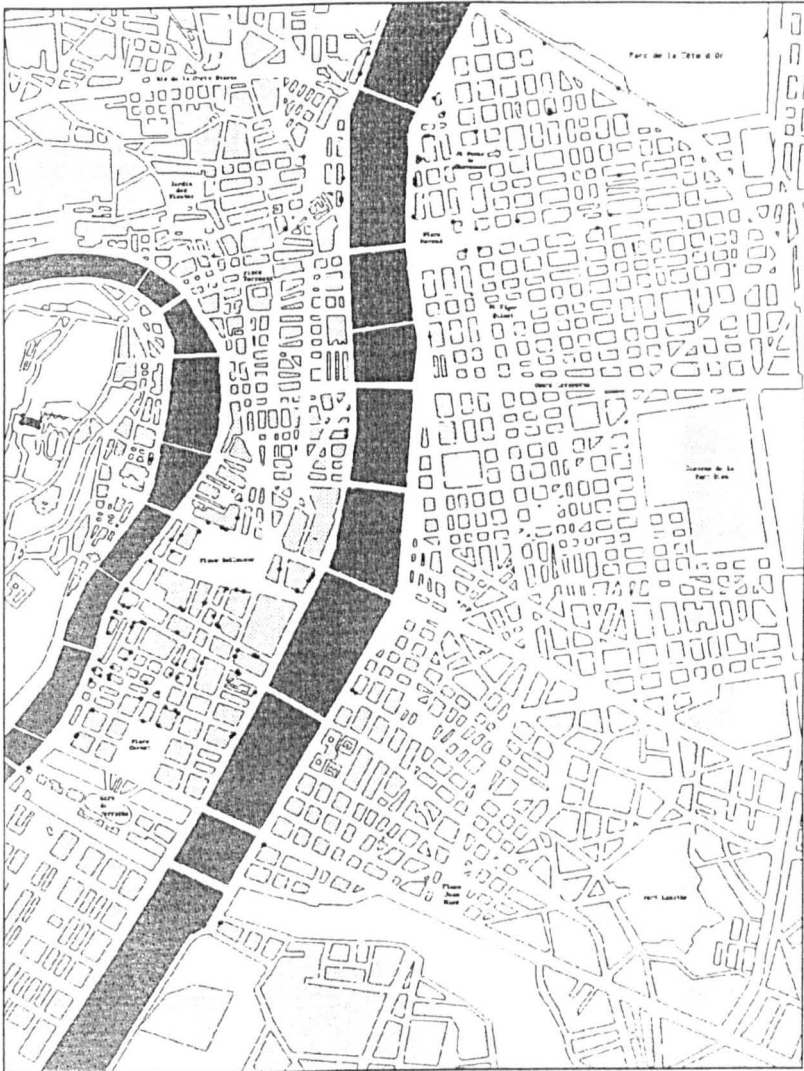
13 Dufourt, op. cit., pp. 19-22.

14 Demaison, op. cit., passim.

15 J.-L. Pinol, 'Mobilités et immobilismes d'une grande ville: Lyon de la fin du XIX^e siècle à la seconde guerre mondiale', doctorat ès lettres, Lyon II, 1989, p. 184.

16 Pinol, *Espace sociale*, pp. 80-84.

17 A considerable majority still lived in the 2nd arrondissement (57.0%). The remainder were found mainly in the Sixth (23.44%) and Fifth (8.57%).



Map 4.4
Residence of nobles in central Lyon

especially Ecully and Tassin la Demi-Lune possessed the same social mix as the 2nd arrondissement.

There was also a cultural division between the two districts. Practising Catholics were more numerous in the 2nd arrondissement, whilst there was a certain Protestant presence in the 6th. The 2nd arrondissement was the site of institutions like the *Faculté catholique*, while the left bank was home to the University and the Prefecture. We shall see that the 6th was the only part of Lyon in which the lay centre right was well organized.

There is evidence that by the 1930s this opposition was becoming blurred. Map 4.4 suggests that some nobles had moved to the Brotteaux, where a significant minority were clustered along the Quai de Serbie and around Place Morand.¹⁸ This squares with Jean-Luc Pinol's finding that the geography and sociology of elite *cercles* was less contrasted in 1936 than it had been thirty years previously. From 1919 one such body, the *Cercle de l'union*, gathered together an upper bourgeoisie united by fear of social upheaval. J-L. Pinol's 'index of dissimilarity' also shows a declining difference between the bourgeois parts of the 2nd and 6th.¹⁹ In the mid-1930s the *Croix de Feu* and PSF did indeed transcend the Brotteaux-*Presqu'île* opposition, the first party of any importance to do so. All the same, we shall see that the 2nd-6th cleavage remained essential to understanding fractures in the ruling class.

The diversity of elites in the Rhône becomes still more apparent when medium sized industrial towns are considered. Apart from monopolization of the dyeing industry by the Gillet group, local businessmen with slowly accumulated capital remained dominant.²⁰ None of the cotton towns of the Beaujolais possessed close links with Lyon. Perhaps the best example of the existence of an island of autonomous development is the town of Cours, which possessed a remarkably distinct economic, social and political life. The cotton merchants of Villefranche were part of a circuit that included Alsatian weavers and local dyers, while the metallurgical industry of the sub-prefecture was dependent upon the vine. The only exception to this pattern is Givors: its concentration of semi-skilled metal workers formed in effect a part of the *grand banlieu* of Lyon.

From Merchant-manufacturing to Monopoly Capitalism

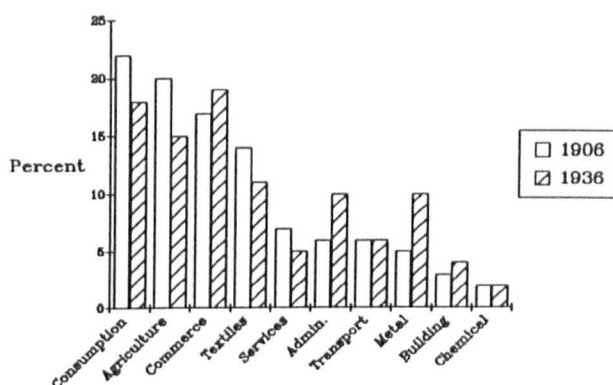
The only available means of summarising changes in the economy is census data on the active population. Unfortunately, thanks to falsification of censuses in Lyon, this

¹⁸ It may also be significant that one noble resident of Quai Serbie was a Protestant.

¹⁹ Before 1914 the *Cercle de Commerce*, dominated by anti-clerical new rich, recruited mainly in the Brotteaux. It contrasted with the aristocratic *Cercle de Lyon* and the old bourgeois *Cercle de Divan*, which was implanted mainly in the 2nd. A fourth *cercle*, the Jockey Club, occupied a median position. The latter three combined in the *Cercle de l'Union* after the war. Pinol, *Mobilités et immobilismes*, pp. 239-64, and p. 408 for index of dissimilarity. ²⁰ Cayez, *op.cit.*, p. 353 notes for the nineteenth century the limits of Lyonnais influence over smaller towns. This situation had not fundamentally changed in the 1920s, although silk weaving retained a significant position in the economy of the Monts du Beaujolais, and the Gillets were to establish control over the most important dyeing and finishing concerns of Villefranche, Tarare and Thizy.

information is not reliable. Graph 3 compares the situation in 1906, the year of the last reliable census, with that of 1936. In the latter year a suspicious *Statistique générale* purged a considerable number of duplicate and partially completed forms. Jean-Luc Pinol concludes that the resulting figures overestimate the traditional branches of the economy, especially the silk industry.²¹ But the results are certainly an improvement on earlier years.

Graph 3: The Active Population in the Rhône, 1906 and 1936



The tendency is clear. New sectors such as metal working and chemicals expanded, dragging the building industry in their wake. Textiles and consumption industries (such as wood, clothing, leather), declined in both relative and absolute terms.²² Nevertheless, neither the advances of 'secteurs de pointe' nor the overestimation of the traditional sectors should obscure the weight of the old economy. For example the garment industry provided a living for over 33,000 persons in 1936.

The dualism in the economy also emerges from Table 2, which compares the level of concentration in selected sectors in 1906 and 1936. Drawn from the same source as the previous table, it is necessary to interpret these figures with similar caution. In addition, it must be borne in mind that the growing tendency for industrialists to own a series of factories leads to an underestimation of the degree of concentration. Nevertheless, all those sectors listed experienced some increase in the ratio of workers to bosses. Even in the least concentrated sector, the food industry, the number of firms employing more than 100 workers increased. On the other hand, in all but the capital

²¹ Pinol, *Mobilités et immobilismes*, pp. 287, 293-96. My own comparison with survey of silk looms available to the fabrique in 1935 suggests an overestimation in the census of about one third. In the metallurgical industry a greater figure in the census is due to calculation of patronal statistics on the basis of full time equivalents, rather than individuals.

²² This is confirmed by J-L. Pinol's figures, which show that in Lyon the number of electors occupied in older artisanal trades such as shoemaking and carpentry had fallen considerably in percentage terms since the late nineteenth century, although the rate of fall had declined between the wars (*Mobilités et immobilismes*, p. 456).

intensive chemical industry the dispersal of production in 1936 is striking, especially in the food, clothing, leather and building trades. In Lyon the proportion of small shopkeepers in the electorate actually grew from 1921 to 1936.²³ Even in the textile and engineering industries there are only ten or eleven workers per patron. There were few very large plant--16 in 1906, twice as many thirty years later. Much more common were establishments with 21 to 500 workers, the great majority of these, no doubt, were family firms.

Table 2. Concentration of production in the Rhône²⁵

	1906				1936			
Branch	a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d
Food	31	7	-	2.1	45	16	-	2.6
Textiles	219	74	7	6.3	238	68	7	10.1
Clothing	102	8	-	2.2	139	23	1	3.9
Leather	19	7	1	4.2	25	1	2	5.9
Building	51	2	-	4.2	84	10	2	5.8
Metal	89	22	2	7.0	199	43	8	11.4
Chemicals	32	9	3	36.4	40	18	3	52.0

In the Rhône, then, the industrial growth of the 1920s led, with some significant exceptions, to a slow and uneven elimination of small production and to an increase in the relative importance of sectors such as engineering and chemicals.²⁶ In the following sections these changes will be examined in more detail.

The Soierie: Relative Decline and Restructuring

At its apogee in the 1860s the *fabrique* had employed nearly half of all workers in Lyon and possessed some 120,000 looms in the region.²⁷ At the end of the 1920s not only had the silk industry declined in relative importance within Lyon, but production in the United States dwarfed that of France.²⁸ Yet on the eve of the Depression, silk production still accounted for 11% of the value of French exports. It employed an estimated 100,000 workers in twelve departments. And although the number of looms

²³ Pinol, *Mobilités et immobilismes*, p. 456.

²⁴ The rest were either commercial enterprises or glassworks.

²⁵ a = 21-100, b = 101-500, c = >501 workers, d = number of workers for each boss.

²⁶ In the past two decades historians have modified the pessimistic accounts of economic performance that were produced in the 1950s, placing considerable emphasis on the 1920s. This view is summarized by F. Caron, *op. cit.*, *passim*. But as Tom Kemp has pointed out this does not dispose of the problem of the dualism in the French economy (T. Kemp, 'French Economic Performance: Some New Views Critically Examined', *EHQ*, vol 15, 1895, pp. 473-88).

²⁷ Yves Lequin, *Les ouvriers de la région lyonnais (1848-1914)*, Paris, 1972.

²⁸ A. Isaac, 'Les cahiers de l'industrie française. La soie', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1930, pp. 89-106: The USA consumed 80% of world raw silk production; France one fifth of the American figure.

had fallen to something like 49-50,000 by 1931, productivity was very much higher than in 1914.²⁹

What these figures do not show is a complex internal restructuring. Between the wars the industry was characterized by an intricate mixture of traditional and advanced technologies, of artisan and factory production, and of industrial and pre-industrial modes of production.

Charles Sabel and Jonathan Zeitlin have argued that the silk industry represented an early example of 'flexible production', a viable alternative to the mass production model, which was destroyed only by the misguided rationalizing efforts of big firms such as Rhône-Poulenc in the 1960s.³⁰ It is true that the *soierie* owed its success to its flexibility. But the industry was characterized by intense competition and conflict, all the more relevant to the present study because it involved not only exploitation of labour by capital, but also of artisan by merchant, and even of capitalist by capitalist.

In 1928 278 out of 399 (70%) members of the *Syndicat des fabricants de soieries* (SFS), and an unknown number of unsyndicated *fabricants*, possessed no factories of their own.³¹ An apparently anachronistic merchant-manufacturing system survived partly because its flexibility allowed the industry to adapt to the changing patterns of demand and constant fluctuations inherent in the market for luxury goods. The *fabricant* was able to have his cloth woven and dyed by sub-contractors (*façonniers*), each with their own secret, giving the fabricant an enormous choice of threads, weaves, dyes and finishes, and the ability to switch rapidly from one type of production to another.³² Another advantage was that with no fixed capital of their own, *fabricants* were able to avoid some of the consequences of frequent economic downturns by passing them on to *façonniers*. Forced by shortage of work to accept contracts at lower prices, it was the weavers who paid the price of recession.³³

By the 1920s many *façonniers* bore little resemblance to the *canuts* of the previous century. Dyeing was monopolized by the multinational Gillet group, which nevertheless continued to work *à façon*. Weavers too were often important businesses

29 This includes all branches of the industry. See A. Isaac, op. cit., His figures for looms are inconsistent: first he gives a figure of 49-50,000, then a few pages further on speaks of 52,600 looms in the region. It may be that the first figure takes into account the non-employment of a certain number of looms.

30 C. Sabel and J. Zeitlin, 'Historical Alternatives to Mass Production: Politics, Markets and Technology in Nineteenth Century Industrialization', *Past and Present*, No. 108, 1985, pp. 173-76. Their views owe much to the optimistic assessments of certain interested contemporaries: a Christian trade unionist spoke of a system 'tout entier fondé sur les principes de liberté et de devoir qui sont les seules bases solides sur lesquelles doit s'édifier la paix sociale' (*La Voix Sociale*, 10-5-1925).

31 *Compte Rendu Annuel des Travaux du Syndicat des Fabricants de Soieries de Lyon*, (hereafter CRSFS) 1928. Many thanks to Madame Rieu of the *Syndicat Textile du Sud-est* who supplied me with copies of these documents. The number of merchants who were not members of the syndicate in 1928 is unknown. In 1935 280 out of 600 *fabricants* were members.

32 M. Laferrière, op. cit., p. 96; Isaac, op. cit., p. 104.

33 H. Bertrand, *Soierie Lyonnaise. Chardonne et Soie Ordinaire. Evolutions Récentes; Situation Actuelle*, Lyon, 1930., pp. 80-81.

in their own right. The *Syndicat des tisseurs mécanique à façon* grouped 206 firms in the region in 1928. In 1935 these *gros façonniers* possessed on average 80 looms.³⁴

In the previous century it had seemed that artisan weavers might disappear along with their hand looms.³⁵ Yet during the 1920s home weaving flourished. Average factory size, having grown before 1914, began to fall. This was made possible by rural electrification and by the inexpensiveness of converting handlooms. Apart from the advantages outlined above, home weaving now had the added attraction of escaping the Eight Hour Law of 1919.³⁶ Not only therefore did traditional merchant manufacturers survive, but many of those *fabricants* who owned their own factories, especially those with less capital resources, put jobs out to small *façonniers*.³⁷ In 1936 one in five of all looms in the Rhône were operated by home weavers. They were located in the Croix Rousse, the Brotteaux, the Charpennes quarter of Villeurbanne, but above all in rural communes in the Monts du Beaujolais, especially the canton of Tarare, as well as in neighbouring departments.³⁸

The second wind of merchant-manufacturing coincided with industrialization of the silk industry, and the emergence of a closely integrated elite of spinners, throwers, dyers and weavers, who came together in the production of artificial fibres. Mechanization of weaving from the last quarter of the nineteenth century³⁹ was associated with a certain democratization of silk products due to use of cheaper Asian raw silk and mechanized dyeing.⁴⁰ Democratization was pushed a stage further by the use of artificial fibres to replace cotton and wool in less expensive cloths from the early 1900s.⁴¹ Use of rayon rose dramatically in the interwar years from 0.9m kgs in 1922 to 7m in 1928, a year in which 6m kgs of natural silk were used by the fabrique. More and more the industry concentrated on a relatively narrow range of Chinese crêpes, which led to extreme competition and to anxiety about the future of luxury cloths.⁴²

Industrialization and standardization led to the appearance of both the *gros façonnier* and the *fabricant-usinier*. The latter accounted for 50% of looms in 1905. In 1928 they made up 30% of the membership of the SFS, and possessed an average of

34 Figures for the number of workers vary from 20,000 (*Nouvelliste* 24-5-28) to 27,000 (*Nouvelliste* 21-3-31). A more reliable survey in CRCCCL, 1935, p. 148, gives a figure of 15,157 looms—45% of those available to the *fabrique*.

42 M.-L. Bourgeon, 'Répartition des métiers de Tissage de la Soie au Service de la Fabrique Lyonnaise en 1937-8', ER 1938, pp.215-34, cit., p. 216.

36 Laferrère, op. cit., pp. 180-1. H. Bertrand, op. cit., p. 46. Albout, op. cit., passim.

37 Isaac, op. cit., p. 100: he added, 'Aujourd'hui la rationalisation technique a fait disparaître le charme de ce travail en famille. Chaque opération est fait dans un atelier séparé, et le peu qui subsiste du tissage à domicile, grâce à la diffusion du force électrique, imite le division du travail pratiqué dans les usines'.

38 Bourgeon, op. cit., p. 232. In Lyon and Villeurbanne there were 3,963 looms in factories and 1,148 at home. There were 2,409 home looms in the Rhône. See also C. Albout, 'Démographie et industrialisation d'une région rurale de la fin du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours: le canton de Tarare', *mémoire de maîtrise*, Lyon II, 1970; Guiot, op. cit., passim. M. Bonneville, op. cit., pp. 48-9.

39 Lequin, op. cit. pp. 76-85. Bourgeon, op. cit., p. 229; Laferrère, op. cit. p. 177-8; Isaac, op. cit., p. 92. Automatic looms represented less than 5% of the total in 1873, 72% in 1914, 90% in 1931 and 97% in 1936.

40 Isaac, op. cit., p. 89.

41 Pinton, 'La Soie Artificielle à Lyon', ER vol 6, 1930, pp. 242-3; Isaac, op. cit., pp. 95-7. In 1931 rayon cost about 20% less than cotton.

42 CRCCCL, 1929, report of the *marchand de soie*, Cotte; Bertrand, op. cit., passim.

181 looms in 1936—considerably more than the *gros façonniers*. *Fabricant usiniers* were more likely to be limited liability companies than were those without fixed capital.⁴⁴

Average figures, however, conceal the appearance of an elite of very large weavers. In velvet weaving a monopoly emerged in 1924 when four firms were federated in the Manufacture de Velours et Peluches. Genuine monopolies were rare, but many owned a series of specialist concerns. Bianchini-Férier, for example, set up its own retail outlet in Paris in 1898, and in 1910 and 1925 absorbed dyeing and finishing factories at Tournon and Villeurbanne respectively.⁴⁵ Large weavers were also involved in other branches of the industry. Henry Bertrand participated in the Compagnie Générale de Soies de France et d'Indochine, which operated spinning concerns in Pnom Penh and the metropolis, and was also involved in the artificial textile industry.⁴⁶

Concentration and monopoly was also a feature of dyeing, for the new method of roller dyeing was a capital intensive process. In the 1920s dying was dominated by the factories of the Gillet family—2,200 workers were employed at their rue Flachet factory in Villeurbanne alone. Gillet reinforced its position through a series of take-overs.⁴⁷ On the eve of the depression the Gillet's headed a powerful group. Filials had been set up abroad. Members of the family sat on the boards of powerful concerns such as Rhône-Poulenc, Kuhlmann and Crédit Lyonnais. Edmond Gillet was a regent of the Bank of France.⁴⁸

The third component of the big business interest in the silk industry consisted of importers, spinners and throwers of raw silk—usually known as *marchands de soie*. Even before the rise of 'artificial silk' this branch of the *fabrique* had been dominated by a few rich merchants.⁴⁹ Only those with considerable resources could import from the Far East. *Marchands de soie* had traditionally served as bankers to *fabricants*, so they were closely linked to financial circles. In the 1920s they were able to corner the market in the high torsion threads used for producing staple Chinese crêpes.⁵⁰

Marchands de soie, dyers and big weavers came together in the artificial silk industry. Here too the Gillet family played an important role, having taken the lead in the creation of the Comptoir des Textiles Artificiels in 1911. Foreign investors such as Courtaulds put up finance, but Lyonnais capital was of equal importance. Thus the

43 CRCCCL, 1935 p. 148.

44 CRSFS, 1928: 36% of *fabricants-usiniers*, 11% of non-usiniers. The latter figure would be much lower if *non-syndiqués* were taken into account.

45 Laferrère, op. cit., p. 187.

46 Laferrère, op. cit., p. 205.

47 Bonneville, op. cit., pp. 17, 51; Laferrère, op. cit., p. 210-212, 226.

48 M. Peyronnet, op. cit., pp. 108-9.

49 Pinton, op. cit., there were 107 members of the *Union des Marchands de soie* in 1920.

50 Bertrand, op. cit., pp. 55-9; Peyronnet, op. cit., pp. 201-8.

marchand de soie Morel-Journal and the *fabricant-usinier* Henry Bertrand were involved in the Société Lyonnais de Soie Artificiel.⁵¹ A number of large artificial textile factories were set up in suburban communes during the middle and late 1920s. The biggest was SASE at Vaulx en Velin, which employed 3,000 workers before the economic crisis.⁵²

In the nineteenth century conflict within the silk industry had been relatively simple. Merchants had faced masters and journeymen. In the twentieth century, matters were rather more complex. At this stage it is necessary only to indicate three potential sources of friction.

1. The historic battle of *façonniers* for a minimum price (tariff) continued. It was, however, complicated by the fact that *gros façonniers* tended to blame the indiscipline and the competition of 'privileged' home weavers for driving down prices. They therefore demanded extension of social legislation to home weavers.⁵³
2. Large factory-owning weavers who had invested heavily in capital equipment in the hope of taking advantage of an expanding market, joined with *gros façonniers* in denouncing the unfair competition of home weavers, and in demanding an end to their exemption from hours legislation.⁵⁴ They were backed by the large dyers and *marchands de soie* with whom they were associated.
3. Merchant-capitalists, along with those medium factory owners who also took advantage of the cheapness of home weaving, viewed such attacks on the artisanate as a threat to their own existence. They idealized the artisanate and attacked 'American methods', whilst redoubling their exploitation of home weavers. In fact traditionalist rhetoric obscured the fact that not all home weavers produced luxury goods. Many produced low quality cloths for the eastern markets, and were able to compete with the Japanese only by avoiding social costs. Just because merchant-manufacturing was an older mode of production did not mean that it was less efficient.

In the 1920s prosperity dulled the edge of conflict. During the war the silk industry had survived reasonably well, left to its own devices by the government. From 1919 new markets, especially in Brazil and Argentina, permitted expansion.⁵⁵ In spite of downturns in 1920-1 and 1924, the general trend was upwards until the end of 1928. In that year it was reported to the Chamber of Commerce that 'business could not be better; all looms are working, all mills are turning. No unemployment...'. The

51 Pinton, op.cit., p. 237: 'The present tendency, as visible in Lyon as it is elsewhere, is pushing this industry toward concentration under the more or less narrow surveillance of the Comptoir des Textiles Artificiels'. This cartel was in turn dominated by Gillet, which possessed interests in almost all the new enterprises.

52 A. Pinton, op. cit.; J. Perret, 'Dans la banlieue industrielle de Lyon: Vaulx en Velin,' ER, vol 8, 1937, pp. 24-33. Laferrière, op. cit., pp. 210-12; Bonneville, op. cit., pp. 17, 51.

53 *Nouvelliste*, 25-5-1928. Even in periods of prosperity, competition among *façonniers* tended to result in the degradation of prices.

54 Small weavers were also accused of luring away the best workers with the promise of overtime and high wages. PVCLL, 7-2-1929.

55 S. Garcin, 'La fabrique lyonnais de soieries, 1900 à 1929', *mémoire de maîtrise*, Lyon II, 1969.

only complaint was a shortage of labour.⁵⁶ But as far as equilibrium between production and consumption was concerned, the fate of the *soierie* was in the hands of Japanese producers of raw silk and American weavers.⁵⁷

Cotton: backwardness and decline

Cotton had been carded, spun and woven in the Monts du Beaujolais since the eighteenth century.⁵⁸ Tarare specialized in the manufacture of muslins and heavier curtain and furnishing materials. These were embroidered by rural labour. Amplepuis produced cheap cotton cloths.⁵⁹ In Thizy dyeing and finishing employed the majority of the 5,000 cotton workers. Further north in Cours blankets were the speciality.⁶⁰ Finally, spinning, weaving and especially dyeing employed several hundred workers in Villefranche.⁶¹

In many respects the structure of the cotton industry resembled that of the *soierie*. There was a strong movement towards concentration and monopoly in dyeing and finishing. In Villefranche total concentration of the dyeing industry had been achieved by 1919.⁶² In the late 1920s the Alsatian Thaon group absorbed the dyers of Roanne, Thizy and Villefranche. Thaon was absorbed by the Gillets in 1935.⁶³ Cours blanket producers monopolized the home market.

But more often weaving was an affair of medium to large self-financing family firms. In Tarare most firms had from eighty to 300 looms.⁶⁴ And as in the silk industry home weaving had been reviving since the turn of the century as factory owners sought to escape regulation and trades unions.⁶⁵ The Beaujolais cotton industry was also marked by technological backwardness.⁶⁶ Whereas in the Vosges one worker could operate as many as twenty-four looms, in the Rhône control of twelve was exceptional, and eight the rule.⁶⁷ In Tarare, five sixths of motive power still came from steam in 1926.⁶⁸ The survival of the industry depended on isolation in the safe

56 CRCCL, 1928, p. 625.

57 Garcin, op.cit., passim.; G.Christiane, 'La fabrique lyonnais de soieries et la Grande dépression, 1929 à 1934', *mémoire de maîtrise*, Lyon II, 1969.

58 For the history of the cotton industry in the Beaujolais see Garrier, op.cit., pp. 202-5; Albout, op.cit., passim; H. Velu, 'Villefranche en Beaujolais', ER, vol XIV, 1938, pp.46-71; J.-P.Payant, 'Etude Démographique d'une cellule industrielle en Haut Beaujolais: Thizy et Bourg-de-Thizy de 1836 à Nos Jours', *mémoire de maîtrise*, Lyon II, 1974; J.-P. Houssel, op. cit., passim.

59 H. Bordas, 'Tarare', in *Annales de Géographie*, vol. 33, 1930, pp. 40-49: In 1923 there were in Tarare 96 cotton firms, employing 2,908 workers. There were also 76 silk establishments with 1,642 workers and a further 67 firms involved in lace making and embroidery. See also, Albout, op.cit., passim. and p. 61.

60 *Nouveau Journal*, 3-1-1928. In Thizy in 1928 1,450 looms produced 6 million metres of cloth annually.

61 Velu, op.cit., p. 51: 1,420 workers were employed in the largest enterprise in 1930.

62 Velu, op.cit., p. 51 ff.

63 Laferrière, op.cit., pp. 225-6 and note 286.

64 Self-financing family firms prosper in textiles because it is possible to accumulate relatively inexpensive looms a few at a time.

65 Houssel, op. cit., p. 147-8; Bordas, op. cit., passim. 48; A. Albitreccia, 'L'industrie du coton', *Annales de géographie*, 1933, pp. 233-47. In the 1920s many *façonniers* worked for both silk and cotton industries.

66 Lequin, op.cit., pp. 93-5. This had been apparent before the Great War.

67 *La Voix Sociale*, July/August, 1930.

68 Bordas, op. cit., pp. 47-48 concludes 'A vrai dire, l'industrie du coton pur manifeste une certaine paresse et vit sur sa réputation'.

home and colonial markets.⁶⁹ This was just the kind of industry attacked by neo-capitalists in the 1920s. In the use of rural looms and in fear of mass production, cotton weavers resembled medium weavers of silk.

Consumption industries

Thanks to the paucity of sources, it is not possible to say much about the 'consumption' industries except that by the 1920s a number of large enterprises had emerged from the sea of small business and artisans. In the food industry brewing, food pastes and milling all experienced concentration.⁷⁰ Clothing was dominated by small workshops and home-working, especially on the slopes of the Croix Rousse, the Brotteaux, Charpennes, Villefranche and Thizy. But there were some large concerns, notably Guicher & Coste, with 1,000 employees in Villeurbanne.⁷¹ In the leather trade the Tanneries Lyonnais at Oullins stood out from the mass. At the other end of the leather industry, the number of cobblers declined as mass-produced men's shoes with rubber soles, often of Czech provenance, penetrated the market. The female footwear industry, on the other hand, retained many features of the luxury industries.⁷² None of these branches were particularly dynamic; all produced largely for the protected home market.

The only real exception was the construction industry. Here too there was a mass of independent firms. But building was increasingly dominated by large firms working on important public works, such as the erection of a new headquarters for the PTT, redevelopment of the Gare de Perrache, and the construction of a new port at La Guillotière.⁷³ Building depended, as always, on general prosperity.

The Chemical Industry

In the interwar years the Lyon region was the principal centre of the French chemical industry, the most concentrated and capital intensive of all activities. It was centred on the commune of St. Fons. It provided raw materials for artificial textiles, colourants, fertilisers and the pharmaceuticals produced by Rhône-Poulenc. The latter, created by fusion of the Usines du Rhône with Poulenc Frères in 1928 was one of the largest companies in France.

At its origins the chemical industry had been closely linked to the *soierie*. The Société Coignet, for example, began by making gelatines for use in the finishing of textiles. Later the wastes from this process were used to produce phosphates for

⁶⁹ Albitreccia, op. cit., p. 237: 75% of French cotton was consumed at home, 18% by the colonies, and only 7% by the foreign market.

⁷⁰ CRCCL, 1928; Velu, op.cit., p. 61; ADR 4m 235, 1-2-1929: the opening of the giant Chambeyron mill at Vaise was considered significant enough to be mentioned in a monthly police report.

⁷¹ Bonneville, op.cit., p. 55.

⁷² CRCCL, 1928, p. 714; Bonneville, op. cit., p. 18.

⁷³ CRCCL, 1928, p. 701.

matches and fertilisers.⁷⁴ The Gillet group meanwhile expanded from dyeing to chemicals.⁷⁵ In the course of the nineteenth century the chemical industry developed a momentum of its own, and was given further impetus by the development of organic chemicals for arms during the war.⁷⁶ Like the metallurgical industry the chemical industry owed its position in the interwar economy to war production. Saint Gobain, for example, had joined the Usines du Rhône in the manufacture of poison gas.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, the link with the silk industry remained. Between the wars it was reinforced by production of artificial fibres. The Lumière company branched out from photographic chemicals to participation in the Société Lyonnaise de Soie Artificielle.⁷⁸ Acetate fibre was produced in Vaise from 1928 by the Société Rhodiaceta, fruit of a collaboration between the inevitable Gillets and the Usines du Rhône. Once again we see the role played by artificial fibres in the development of monopoly capital in Lyon.

Metallurgy

Since the 1830s Lyon had produced ships, railway equipment and machines for the silk and chemical industries. Modern electrical and automobile industries had appeared before 1914. But it was the war which imparted the decisive impetus. In 1919 metallurgy employed 45,000 workers, compared to 25,000 at the outbreak of hostilities. After 1918 re-conversion entailed a certain decline in the number of workers employed; the postwar maximum of 44,446 was reached in 1930.⁷⁹

Heavy metallurgy (gros métallurgie) was a minority activity.⁸⁰ Blast furnaces were found only in Givors, represented by Fives-Lille and Prénat, each employing about 500 workers. Production of semi-finished products (petite métallurgie) was confined largely to Lyon. Among the largest were the Acieries du Rhône which produced milled steel, while Teste of Vaise made wire and cables. There were about thirty foundries in the Agglomération, mainly of small and medium scale.

Most important was the engineering branch (construction mécanique), which employed 71% of all metal workers in the Rhône in 1929.⁸¹ It too was chiefly confined to the Agglomération. But engineering was also carried on in Villefranche.⁸²

⁷⁴ Lequin, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-2; Laferrière, *op. cit.*, pp. 426-490. Similarly the St. Gobain factories in the St. Fons had begun by making sulphuric acid for use in the dyeing industry.

⁷⁵ Laferrière, *op. cit.*, p. 472; P. Cayez, *Progil* article; Peyronnet, *op. cit.*, pp. 87ff. Its factory at Vaise, known since 1919 as Progil, had passed from the making of chemicals for the dyeing industry to manufacture of agricultural products and bitumen.

⁷⁶ Research into aircraft varnishes benefitted the artificial fibre industry. Phenol production led to manufacture of glycol, aspirin and later nylon at Usines du Rhône (Rhône-Poulenc).

⁷⁷ Laferrière, *op. cit.*, pp. 445-9; Peyronnet, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-109; E. Herriot, *Lyon Pendant la Guerre*, *passim*.

⁷⁸ Lequin, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-9; Laferrière, *op. cit.*, p. 192-3.

⁷⁹ Figures from CRCCL; E. Fougère, *L'Effort industriel de Lyon Pendant la Guerre*, Lyon, 1919.

⁸⁰ This survey of the metallurgical industry relies on an interview with Edmond Weitz in *Lyon Républicain*, 15-12-1935.

⁸¹ Out of 46,318 workers, 12,400 worked in the car industry, 8,433 in general engineering, 8,629 in electricity, and the rest in related sectors.

⁸² Velu, *op. cit.*, *passim*: 500 workers at Bonnet produced equipment for the dyeing industry, while at Vermorel another 450 made agricultural machinery.

Engineering firms made a diverse range of products. Les Fils de Jules Weitz specialized in the making of construction equipment such as mechanical diggers.⁸³

Car production was dominated by Marius Berliet. From 1906 Berliet began to out-distance his rivals, having understood the need for outside capital. Government orders for lorries and shells during the war led to rapid expansion. In 1917 came the construction of an enormous integrated factory at Vénissieux, larger than that of Henry Ford in Detroit. Taylorization was rigorously applied in a factory which was the first in Europe to feature a moving assembly line. Berliet was forced to come to an arrangement with his creditors during the downturn of 1921. In the 1920s Berliet therefore lost ground, and was forced to abandon car manufacture in favour of heavy goods vehicles. All the same, Berliet had repaid his debts by 1929, and the firm remained one of national importance, employing 11,000 workers at Vénissieux in 1930.⁸⁴ Alongside Berliet a number of smaller car firms prospered, such as Rochet-Schneider and Luc Court.

The electrical equipment industry had also been boosted by the war. Les Câbles de Lyon began by supplying the electricity generating industry and new tram companies in the 1900s. In a development typical of this capital intensive industry⁸⁵ it was in 1912 absorbed by the Compagnie générale d'électricité (CGE). During the war it made telephone cables, and afterwards profited from rural electrification.⁸⁶ The CGE also controlled the Ateliers de Construction Electriques de Delle, which had transferred from Belfort to Villeurbanne in 1917.⁸⁷ The Lyonnais François Grammont, head of a gigantic group involved in all aspects of electrical construction, managed to conserve his independence for a relatively long period, but in 1928 was bought out by the American Westinghouse Corporation.⁸⁸ Local capital was not, however, entirely absent. As in the motor industry there were a number of smaller firms such as Pétrier Tissot & Raybaud, which made electric motors.

Little is known of the structures of the metallurgical industry. But certain general characteristics can be identified. Firstly, large firms which usually depended on national and international finance dominated the electrical industry. In other branches such large firms were rare, though Berliet stands out. There were also a number of large family firms such as Teste or Weitz, which although legally *sociétés anonymes*, were dominated by a single family.

83 Laferrère, op.cit., pp. 281-2 and 300-1. Edmund Weitz survived the decline of railway production by transferring that side of his activities to Hagondange in the Lorraine.

84 Saint-Loup, *Marius Berliet, l'inflexible*, Paris, 1962; Laferrère, op. cit., pp. 304-10 and 361-81; P. Vidélier, *Vénissieux d'A à Z*, Lyon, 1984.

85 Laferrère, op.cit., pp.327-8.

86 *Lyon Républicain*, 29-12-1935; Laferrère, op.cit., pp. 314-7, 326. There were over 1,000 employees in 1930.

87 Laferrère, op.cit., pp.326.

88 Laferrère, op.cit., pp.319-21.

Second, the progress of metallurgy involved the proliferation of small and medium enterprises.⁸⁹ In Villeurbanne large modern metallurgical factories were almost entirely absent: most of the 96 firms which feature on the 1930 industrial map of the Rhône were medium, small or artisanal concerns. Some produced specialized machine tools in relatively short series. Others worked as sub-contractors for large engineering firms. Some were simply engaged in repair and maintenance. Total integration of large metallic construction factories was in fact rare.⁹⁰ For example they were provided with semi-finished products by 80 foundries of which in 1935 24 out of 80 employed less than ten workers.⁹¹

Thus in some respects the structures of the metallurgical industry were not dissimilar to those of the silk industry.⁹² Edmond Weitz, President of the metallurgy employers' association, spoke of founders in such terms: 'elles formaient avec les ateliers de construction dont elles sont les fournisseurs, un ensemble industriel harmonieux, souple et équilibré qui permettait à la région lyonnaise de soutenir la réputation de qualité de ses fabrications'.⁹³ Weitz idealized the sub-contracting system. But in fact many small and even medium firms were in a position of dependence which Marc Bonneville likens to that of *façonniers* in the silk industry. In the metallurgical, as in the silk industry, there was a potential anti-capitalism even in quite large firms.

From Liberalism to Corporatism

In the above outline of changes in economic structures several potential sources of conflict have been indicated. There was the shift from merchant manufacturing, typified by the *fabrique* but found also in certain other industries such as furniture, to industrial capitalism. Associated with this was the emergence of an elite of monopolistic firms in electricity, vehicle production, weaving, dyeing and artificial fibres. Meanwhile family firms proliferated. Although sometimes quite large, such firms often nursed a dislike of those upon whom they were dependent. Artisans and small businesses were disappearing in some sectors, but progressed in others.

These were changes of some significance, and were bound in some way or other to have had a political impact. But conflicts in business are impossible to comprehend without also taking into account politics, culture and ideology. Business institutions in the Rhône, and more particularly in Lyon, were dominated by the successors of Edouard Aynard, who remained more or less faithful to his version of liberalism. Since the days of the Progressist deputy this elite been immeasurably strength-

⁸⁹ Laferrère, *op. cit.*, p.305.

⁹⁰ Bonneville, *op. cit.*, pp. 57, 61; Pinol, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-2.

⁹¹ PVCCL 14-2-1935; CRCCL, 1935.

⁹² Bonneville, *op. cit.*, p. 62 suggests that small metallurgists in Villeurbanne operated in conditions similar to those of *tisseurs à façon*.

⁹³ *Lyon Républicain*, 15-12-35; Bonneville, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

ened by the economic changes symbolized by the new artificial fibre industry. Yet by the late 1920s this liberal hegemony was threatened firstly by a modernising and reformist challenge from the engineering industry, secondly by a degree of sympathy within the elite itself for those ideas, and thirdly by a reaction against neo-capitalism from sections of the silk and other industries. Before detailing these changes we will look at the relationship of the liberal and Catholic tradition to the silk industry.

The Liberal-Catholic Tradition

Whilst the liberal tradition was not a necessary or direct product of the silk industry, the fact remains that it was nourished by certain aspects of production for the international luxury market. The combination of individualism and discretion can be attributed to the rapid changes in fashions which dictated a constant search for new fabrics, as well as secrecy and rapidity in their design and execution. It could also lead to a stress on the individuality of the consumer, and indeed of Frenchmen in general.

Hence the reluctance of many *fabricants* to join employers' organizations. Reticence was especially characteristic of *fabricants non-usiniers*. Many of them specialized in the most expensive goods, for which demand was least predictable. All feared that organization of *fabricants* would encourage the unity of *façonniers* and the establishment of minimum tariffs. Factory owners often shared the same attitudes. In 1925 Bianchini-Férier bought a finishing concern in order to protect its creations from the prying eyes of rivals and to ensure that they would appear on the market as speedily as possible.⁹⁴ A commemorative booklet published on the death of Edmund Gillet reveals his guiding principle to be that 'unless there is formal proof to the contrary we have only ourselves to blame if all does not go well'.⁹⁵

Social mobility is the second element of Lyonnais liberalism. Setting up as an employer that section of the industry which required no fixed capital was relatively easy. Conversely, this meant that many *fabricants non-usiniers* were at the head of marginal concerns which relied on *façonniers* to make cloth quickly enough for them to sell before suppliers demanded payment.⁹⁶ Insecurity was reflected in the fluctuating membership of the SFS, which rose from 372 in 1920 to 725 in 1929, and dropped back again to about 300 in 1937.⁹⁷ This openness to talent reinforced the notion of rule by a meritocracy founded on the work ethic, rather than birth.⁹⁸ We shall see that it also helped to ensure the allegiance of many white collar workers to liberalism.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Laferrère, op. cit., p. 188: Etablissements Gamma of Villeurbanne.

⁹⁵ P. Gillet, *Edmund Gillet 1873-1831. Industriel, Régent de la Banque de France*, Lyon, 1932, p. 2. For another *usinier* Henry Bertrand, the guiding principle of *fabricants* had to be 'exclusiveness and discretion, in the interests of their town and their country'. Bertrand, op. cit., p. 187.

⁹⁶ Laferrère, op. cit., pp. 95, 97, 107.

⁹⁷ CRSFS, 1937; F. Geni, 'L'Organisation Professionnelle de la Fabrique Lyonnaise de Soieries: Etude Historique et Critique', *thèse de droit*, Grenoble, 1942, p. 52; CRSFS, 1937.

⁹⁸ Hence Calixte's contemptuous dismissal of the nobility, Dufourt, op. cit., p. 125.

⁹⁹ See page 89.

Another bulwark of the liberal tradition was in the dependence of the *soierie* upon foreign markets and raw materials. Sixty per cent of production was exported in 1930, while French sericulture met only a fraction of raw material requirements. Although in the 1890s *fabricants* had been split on protectionism,¹⁰⁰ and although in the 1920s worries about Japanese competition were growing,¹⁰¹ these were exceptions to the free trade rule. The silk industry fought a tenacious but increasingly hopeless battle in defence of liberty of exchange. Allies in port towns and the wine trade were insufficient to overcome the enormous weight of protectionist interests. Liberal principles did not prevent alliance with the state in the promotion of imperialism in the Far East, though the silk industry resisted the neo-mercantilism of cotton and metallurgical industries.¹⁰²

Finally, the labour intensive nature of production explains distrust of social reform. Paternalism was not unknown in the silk industry. But it rarely went beyond the provision of company housing as a compensation for low wages. This scarcely contradicted the orthodox view that the only means of improving the lot of the workers was to reduce production costs.

Unable or unwilling to dip into their pockets, only ideology and religion remained as remedies for working class discontent. The goal was to diffuse a model of behaviour rather than to disburse funds. Charity was designed for the edification of the humble. Calixte reproached his uncle for the sin of anonymous charity: 'pas même ses initiales. Est-il concevable? Comment les gens seraient-ils édifiés et suivraient-ils son exemple?'¹⁰³ The austere face presented to the world by the Lyonnais bourgeoisie can be interpreted as part of the same desire to 'set an example'.¹⁰⁴

The Catholicism of Lyonnais businessmen can be seen in the same light. A cult of the Virgin Mary, the specialty of the Lyonnais Church, taught dutiful resignation to the working class.¹⁰⁵ John Laffey shows how in the capital of the *Oeuvre du propagation de la foi* missionary ardour and economic utility went hand in hand in the promotion of imperialism.¹⁰⁶ But there is more to the Catholicism of elites in Lyon than manipulation. In a city which Edouard Aynard had described as 'a convent where it is permitted to make a fortune', liberalism and Catholicism met at a multitude of points. The apparently irreconcilable could be reconciled either by the *Nou-*

100 Laferrère, op. cit., pp. 196-9.

101 J. Laffey, 'Lyonnaise Imperialism in the Far East, 1900-1938', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 10, 1970, pp. 225-40.

102 Laffey, op. cit., passim; J. Laffey, 'Roots of French Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century: the Case of Lyon', *French Historical Studies*, 1973.

103 Dufourt op. cit., pp. 64-66.

104 Calixte indicates to Philippe, 'avec une fierté incompréhensible ses bottines fatiguées, son pardessus ciré et son pantalon frangé'. Philippe naïvely replies 'Ah! Calixte [...] vous êtes un gros patron, tout le monde le sait; vous pouvez être sale', op. cit., p. 119.

105 K. Passmore, 'Une contre-mobilisation. La droite et l'extrême droite lyonnaise', in P. Dujardin (ed.), *La mémoire édifianse. Gestes de mémoire et identités collectives*, forthcoming.

106 Laffey, 'Imperialism 1900-1938', p. 231, quotes Auguste Isaac, for whom the *mission civilisatrice* meant elevating the native to the status of 'one who understands the services rendered to him and is accustomed to pay for them'.

velliste's belief that the classical economists had merely discovered the laws through which God regulated the universe,¹⁰⁷ or by an Aynardian separation of religious and economic life. But in either case Catholicism was essential to the self-definition of elites. Charity, according to Jean Dufourt, was partly a means of getting oneself known in the best society.¹⁰⁸ This applied as much to liberal patronage of private schools as to the distribution of alms to working class women by integrists. The Lyonnais did not make a public show of their Catholicism.¹⁰⁹ But it was one of the keys to social acceptance. In *Calixte* Philippe is taken to task for hiding himself behind a pillar at mass.¹¹⁰ Catholicism, as we have seen in the case of the countryside and will see again when white collar workers are examined, was also essential to the integration of a popular constituency. But religion was never merely a tool of the elites and could therefore be a source of disunity.

It must stressed once more that there was nothing *necessary* about the Catholic liberalism of business elites. Indeed, there were zones of ambiguity. Individualism in the silk industry was limited by rules that were largely unspoken, while written contracts were rare.¹¹¹ At least among wealthier *fabricants* a network of family ties preserved the industry from some of the worst effects of competition. In 1929 André Demaison wrote: 'à Lyon on ne compte pas seulement sur l'individu, trop vite périssable, mais sur la famille dont le nombre est ainsi garant de continuité, de durée prospère'.¹¹² The family could be seen in liberal terms as a bulwark against state intervention. But it could also feed into a form of corporate self-regulation—an alternative means of saving the *soierie* from 'socialism'. This helps to explain the appeal of the ALP and later Victor Perret's traditionalist *Fédération républicaine* to elements of the silk industry, for corporatism could be justified in terms of the protection of initiative and individuality.

Maintenance of the liberal-silk hegemony

Liberalism was nevertheless bound up with the fortunes of the silk industry. It owed many of its features to the nature of merchant-manufacturing in a luxury industry. Liberal individualism was transmitted to factory producers and even to monopolists,

107 *Le Nouvelliste*, 1-1-1932: 'Les lois qui tiennent les rapports constants et établies par l'expérience entre les différents phénomènes économiques présentent un caractère providentiel. Trop longtemps méconnues, elles ont pour but à la fois de sauvegarder la liberté que Dieu donna à l'homme comme le premier et le plus grand de ses privilèges et, en même temps, de le rappeler simultanément aux règles de la morale et de la sagesse humaine parce que tous les abus que cette liberté peut permettre sont immédiatement signalés ou corrigés par les maux qu'ils entraînent'.

108 Dufourt, op. cit., p. 121: 'Intéressez-vous à nos œuvres charitables. Ce sera une excellente façon de vous faire connaître avantageusement'.

109 Demaison, op. cit., p. 12: 'Même la foi religieuse ne se manifeste qu'avec une discrétion qui n'a d'égal que sa profondeur'.

110 Dufourt, op. cit., p. 121-2.

111 Laferrière, op. cit., p. 110.

112 Demaison, op. cit., passim..

like the Gillets and the Morel-Journeils, who reigned over business institutions in the interwar years.

The purpose of this section is to explain how the hegemony of these big dyers, weavers, and *marchands de soie* survived the diversification of the economy. Concluding a study of industrialization in Lyon before the First World War Yves Lequin, states that 'Lyon n'est plus la ville de la soie que pour les esprits mal informés'.¹¹³ Yet in the interwar years many Lyonnais persisted in their ignorance. Even Edmond Weitz, an implacable opponent of the *soierie*, was obliged to recognize in 1930 that it 'remains the dominant industry of this city'.¹¹⁴

One explanation is that big firms in the electrical industry played little part in business politics in the Rhône, for their headquarters were in Paris. The same applies to the larger chemical firms. By default this left local institutions to the silk industry. Furthermore, the silk industry retained considerable economic weight. The extent to which it filled the role of a leading sector was probably diminishing. But the chemical industry relied on the *soierie* to absorb production of colourants, while the artificial textile industry was a market for sulphuric acid. Engineers produced machines for the weaving and dyeing industries.¹¹⁵ So those metallurgists who attributed the crisis of the 1930s to the downturn in the silk industry were not entirely mistaken.¹¹⁶ The silk industry also enjoyed close relations with local banks. Edouard Aynard's Caisse des Dépôts, as well as the Guérin and Morin-Pons banks had emerged from the *fabrique*.

Most important, the silk industry possessed an entrenched institutional position. Local newspapers were sympathetic to it, while the leading figures in the principal conservative party, the *Fédération Républicaine*, had traditionally been drawn from it.¹¹⁷ For the moment, however, attention can be confined to domination of the Lyonnais employers' movement by the liberal-silk interest.

Leadership of the weavers' association, the SFS, was monopolized by some of the wealthiest *fabricant-usiniers*. In 1928 eight out of nine members of its bureau can be identified, of whom seven were factory owners. *Non-usiniers* were in a majority in the union, but were individualistic, lacked the resources to impose their will, and were in any case satisfied by the federal structure of the SFS.¹¹⁸

The SFS was reputed to by contemporaries to pull the strings of business organizations in Lyon. One President of the Chamber of Commerce, the *marchand de soie* Henry Morel-Journeil, rejected a government proposal on the grounds that 'c'est

¹¹³ Lequin, op.cit., p. 203.

¹¹⁴ PVCCCL, 6-1-1930.

¹¹⁵ According to Marc Bonneville before 1930 most engineering firms in Villeurbanne worked for the *soierie*, op.cit., p. 15.

¹¹⁶ *Lyon Républicain*, 15-12-1935.

¹¹⁷ *Nouveau Journal*: 'Ce journal s'est assez souvent fait l'écho des réclamations de la soierie'. The same applies to *Le Nouvelliste*.

¹¹⁸ *Archives Justin Godart*, (Hereafter AJG) carton 1, Report of Daniel Isaac, 13-10-1935: the SFS was a 'federation of unions, [...] composed of fifteen groups which in reality correspond to an almost equivalent number of very different commerces and industries'.

un principe à la Chambre de Commerce de Lyon de ne pas se mettre en opposition avec le Syndicat des fabricants de soieries, en raison de l'importance de cette industrie sur la place de Lyon et des répercussions que sa prospérité ou son marasme exerce sur la situation des autres branches de l'activité régionale'.¹¹⁹ The organization of the Chamber also shows a bias towards the silk industry. The *Nouveau journal* frankly admitted that 'the brutal application [of one vote per enterprise] would have had the effect of crushing industrialists under the mass of retailers'.¹²⁰ Instead, under a system of voting in four categories, eight out of twenty-three places went to the various branches of the silk industry. Four were allocated to the retail trade, four to wholesalers and seven to other industries. The engineering industry was left with two of the seats in the category 'industries diverses'. In the elected bureau, where most decisions were made, the *fabrique* had a permanent majority.

However, it was not the SFS that dominated. Indeed, certain of its leaders were of unorthodox opinion and on that count excluded from the leadership of the Chamber. No *fabricant* was president from 1919 until 1937.¹²¹ Rather the authority of the relatively broad and prestigious SFS was cited in order to legitimate what in reality was a very narrow elite of dyers, *marchands de soie*, bankers and those *fabricants* who remained liberals. This elite depended for a majority on the chemical and consumption industries, wholesalers and retailers.

The alliance was held together by economic liberalism and opposition to intervention and social reform.¹²² This reminds us that even in the late 1920s liberalism remained a powerful integrating force. Five of the Chamber's six presidents since 1890 had presided over the *Société d'économie politique*, which was dedicated to the propagation of liberal principles.¹²³ Each of the non-silk categories, including the retail trade, was represented by its most successful members, which again illustrates the role of social mobility and status in the diffusion of liberalism.

For the liberal-silk elite control of the Chamber of Commerce was an enormous asset. The Chamber gained legitimacy from its election by all *patentés* and its mission of representing the general economic interest of the region to the government. In practice this allowed the elite to merge its own interests with those of industry as a whole, and indeed with the general interest. The Chamber reinforced its claim to neutrality by observing the rule of unanimity in its public pronouncements.¹²⁴ For these

119 PVCCCL, 14-2-1935. On 10-1-1929, Louis Guéneau in a debate over the creation of a futures market in silk at Lyon, stated 'puisque les fabricants de soieries ne sont pas prononcés la Chambre ne peut pas aller contre leur désir'. The President objected to such a naked expression of sectionalism.

120 *Le Nouvelliste*, 26-3-1939.

121 Until Paul Charbin took over as a result of the upheavals of the Popular Front.

122 H. Morel-Journel, *Notes sur la Chambre de Commerce de Lyon à l'Usage de ses Membres*, Lyon, 1937, the Chamber of Commerce remained convinced that 'liberty is the soul of commerce', and that 'the shackles of all kinds that have been applied to trade, above all since the war of 1914 to 1918, [have not] modified its ideas on this question'.

123 Morel-Journel, *Notes*, p. 27.

124 PVCCCL, 19-1-1934: President Antoine Celle reminded members that as 'arbiters of interests that are sometimes contradictory, our Chamber must not know division—unity is its strength'.

reasons associations representing special interests attempted, not always successfully, to obtain the Chamber's endorsement of petitions to the government.¹²⁵

The power of the Chamber was further enhanced by the Presidency of the Thirteenth Economic Region, which included amongst others the Chambers of Tarare and Villefranche. Both these bodies were dominated by conservative cotton manufacturers and wine merchants whose opinions generally matched those of their fellows in Lyon--free trade excepted. ¹²⁶Also, the Lyon Chamber was automatically granted a seat in the bureau of the Assembly of Presidents of Chambers of Commerce of France. This organization too was designed to circumvent the 'rule of number'.¹²⁷

No other organization could seriously dispute the claims of the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon. The *Union des Chambres Syndicales Patronales Lyonnaises* (UCS) grouped 79 individual firms in 1928 and federated most of the large industrial and commercial interests. It claimed to be the organization that best 'brought together and synthesized' the views of the local patronat.¹²⁸ In reality its role was mainly restricted to organization of elections—always uncontested—to corporate bodies, not least the Chamber of Commerce.¹²⁹ The local organization of the CGPF, the *Association Industriel, Commerciale et Agricole* (AICA), vegetated until June 1936.¹³⁰

In many ways the position of the business elite in Lyon was analogous to that of the USE. Both were Catholic and liberal, with a leaning towards the Progressists: two of the interwar Presidents of the Chamber of Commerce—Auguste Isaac and Jean Coignet—were prominent in the *Fédération républicaine*, as Aynard had been. Continuity across the generations is illustrated by Isaac's sponsorship of Henry Morel-Journal, who became President in 1935.¹³¹ Agricultural and business elites were both legitimated by control over 'democratically' elected corporate bodies. Both Chambers of Commerce and Agriculture, moreover, were key institutions in the system of pressure group politics which grew up after the war. Finally, business leaders cultivated links with centrist deputies such as the right wing Radical Paul Massimi. Henry Morel-Journal was on good terms with Mayor Herriot, even though he thought little of his politics. John Laffey has shown the Chamber's imperial interests were furthered by contacts with civil servants.

125 For example, refusal to consider a duty on imported raw rubber, PVCCL, 16-10-1930.

126 A typical statement of their liberal views can be found in *L'industrie dans la région de Roanne, Thizy, et Cours*, April 1929.

127 Morel-Journal's expression, PVCCL, 14-5-1936.

128 *Bulletin de l'Union des chambres syndicales lyonnaises* (BUCCL), June 1928.

129 Morel-Journal, *Notes sur la Chambre de Commerce*, p. 10.

130 See page 82.

131 Morel-Journal, *Journal*, passim, especially 8-8-1928: 'Il n'y a pas de jour qu'[Auguste Isaac, qui m'honore de son amitié, répète qu'il ne veut pas mourir avant de m'avoir vu dans son ancien fauteuil de président [de la Chambre de Commerce].

The Crisis of Liberalism

But by the end of the 1920s there were cracks in the edifice. Some members of the business elite began in the late 1920s to hesitate between traditional liberal individualism, that which held together the majority in the Chamber of Commerce, and certain of the ideas of neo-capitalists.

In the optimistic economic climate of the 1920s big dyers, *marchands de soie* and weavers were all involved in heavy capital expenditure, the consequences of which for the structures of the silk industry have already been seen. Businessmen in these industries sometimes made a fetish of mass production, a position which could lead to suspicion of luxury industries. Thus Henry Morel-Journal complained in his diary of his inability to convince the Radical politician Anatole de Monzie that luxury goods served aesthetic and not industrial needs.¹³² The weaver Louis Guéneau denied that recent progress in the use of artificial fibres had been due to 'abnormal circumstances', and that the construction of new factories would lead to disaster. Natural silk, said Guéneau, had had its day.¹³³ Henry Bertrand saw transfer of the values of the artisanate into factories as responsible for the socialism of the French labour force. His solution was to reduce dependence on skilled work by importing immigrants and turning them into Frenchmen.¹³⁴

There were also economic reasons for hostility to the artisanate. In the Chamber of Commerce Paul Charbin¹³⁵ denounced home weavers for luring the best workers away from factories with promises of high wages in return for long hours. That this represented an attack on the artisanate was scarcely disguised by a distinction between 'genuine' home production those who abused the privileges allowed to artisans.¹³⁶

In the case of Henry Bertrand suspicion of the artisanate was extended to small and medium factory producers. He claimed credit for having contributed to concentration of machine builders: 'this scattering of small workshops constituted [...] a marked inferiority'.¹³⁷ In his own industry he urged the exclusion from the SFS of firms with less than 50 or 100 looms.¹³⁸

Big firms were also distinguished by a pragmatic view of the Eight Hour Law. Thanks to the seasonal nature of their industry the majority of *fabricants* were implacable in their hostility to it. Large producers also opposed the law in principle. But

132 Morel-Journal, *Journal*, 11-11-1932: 'ce beau-là, quelques personnes seulement peuvent l'acheter, son raisonnement est esthétique, il n'est pas industriel'. See also Bertrand, *op. cit.*, p. 18: 'Forward! For the new and colossal product, to the power of new and modern means of production'.

133 Louis Guéneau, *La soie artificielle*, Paris, 1928.

134 Bertrand, *op. cit.*, pp. 49, 147-8: 'L'ouvrier français est plus habile—et moins discipliné—et cela ne se compense pas'.

135 Of the Manufacture de velours et peluches velvet monopoly.

136 PVCC, 7-2-1929.

137 Bertrand, *op. cit.*, p.

138 Bertrand, *op. cit.*, p. 135 ff.

many had nevertheless adapted to it by means of a double or triple shift system, which permitted continuous utilization of capital resources.¹³⁹

A few went further. Bertrand's appeal for respect of the rights of the trade unions, and his approval of social Catholicism, even 'tinted with a light varnish of socialism', put him far in advance of many.¹⁴⁰ Some *fabricants* and *marchands de soie* joined the *Union catholique de commerce et de l'industrie* which approved of the Social Insurance Laws of 1928 and 1930.¹⁴¹ Social reformism did not, then, arise automatically from economic interest.

Finally, big firms were unanimous in endorsing cartels—as long as they were controlled by major producers. Perhaps their most important advantage was that they would facilitate the introduction of new technology, while helping to avoid over-production and unemployment.¹⁴² In other words cartels would remove some of the risks involved in investment. Clearly this represented a break with liberal individualism. Some went further. Paul Charbin, as president of the SFS, informed his constituents that individualism had had its day, and that the interdependence of modern firms prescribed association for purchase of raw materials, manufacturing, sales, and defence of common interests.¹⁴³

It must be stressed that the opinions described above represented only a partial break both with liberal individualism, and with the traditional structures of the *fabrique*. Firstly, support for cartels could be justified by an appeal to the liberal principle of freedom of association. Similarly, attacks on the privileges of artisans could be seen as a defence of *laissez-faire*. The same type of neo-liberal ideology was expressed by René Duchemin, President of the CGPF, and could be seen as a reaffirmation of an Aynardian point of view.¹⁴⁴ Second, commitment to mass production was not total. Big firms wished to profit from the prestige of Lyonnais luxury goods to give them an advantage in the market. Many tended in the 1920s to combine mass production of raw cloth with diversity of finishes, and to treat artificial fibres simply as a means to extend the variety of finishes. Not until the 1930s did they break entirely with 'flexible production'.

Thirdly, the coherence of the ideas described above should not be exaggerated. There were few who subscribed to all of them. Social reform in particular was viewed

139 Double shift meant the operation of two shifts from 4 a.m. to 8 p.m. The 'triple équipe' permitted round the clock working.

140 Bertrand, op.cit., p. 49: Interestingly he does not add the usual rider, that the CGT confine itself to 'professional' issues; M. Fine, 'Toward Corporatism: the Movement for Capital-Labour Collaboration in France, 1914 to 1936', Ph.D. thesis, Wisconsin, 1971, reports the involvement of a local fabricant, P. Dulot, in an association which aimed to use social reforms to combat Bolchevism.

141 Formed in 1928 by a fusion of the *Association des patrons lyonnais*, close to the *Nouvelliste*, and the *Union catholique lyonnaise* which was more moderate. The new group was affiliated to the national social Catholic association, the *Confédération française de professions* of Zamanski.

142 CRCCL, 1928, pp. 360-9. Even *Le Nouvelliste*, a bastion of liberal orthodoxy, looked favourably upon ententes (*Le Nouvelliste*, 9-2-1928).

143 *Le Nouvelliste* 31-3-1928: 'De plus en plus les différentes forces économiques s'organisent en vue d'une action collective. Travaillons donc dans notre sphère à la réalisation d'une masse économique puissante'.

144 Ehrmann, op. cit., pp. 28-9.

with suspicion. 'Modernist' views were most common among the largest firms in the weaving branch, perhaps because of the long-term conflict between factory and home producers in that sector. One President of the SFS, Etienne Fougère, was also Vice-president of Mercier's *Redressement français*, (as well as of the CGPF). But most big weavers in the Chamber of Commerce remained loyal to the liberal majority. Morel-Journal expressed his contempt for luxury production only in private. The liberal-silk interest was more or less united in fending off a challenge from the engineering industry. Only during the economic crisis of the 1930s did this alliance split apart.

Study of the views of metallurgists is handicapped by scarcity of sources, which is in turn a reflection of the lesser prestige within Lyon of their industry. Nevertheless, it is possible to build up a reasonably clear picture. In the first place metallurgists went furthest in their support for social reform. In 1928 Edmond Weitz boasted to the Chamber of Commerce of the spirit of collaboration between employers and reformist trades unions, which had permitted technical improvement and higher wages. In September 1928 a collective contract was signed with the CGT and CFTC.¹⁴⁵ This was a rare enough event to be mentioned in a contemporary publication on industrial relations, which saw the contract as creating a 'veritable economic parliament'.¹⁴⁶ The metallurgy employers' association distributed family allowances and other benefits. In addition to engaging in traditional paternalist activities of this nature the engineering industry was almost alone in patronal circles in accepting the Social Insurance Laws of 1928 and 1930.

Recognition of the rights of trades unions implied reinforcement of patronal organizations. The *Chambre Syndicale des Industries Métallurgiques du Rhône* (CSIM) was the best organized employers' group in the department. Whereas the SFS was essentially a pressure group integrated into a lobbying system crowned by the Chamber of Commerce, the CSIM was designed to take its place in a system of collective bargaining. In this the CSIM was aided by Aymé Bernard's AICA. AICA had been established in 1918 to deal with postwar labour unrest and to implement the new system of collective contracts, something the Chamber of Commerce was ill-equipped to do. For this purpose an inter-syndical fund was set up and a documentation service created.¹⁴⁷ AICA also posed a direct challenge to the Chamber, for it took upon itself the task of creating a common front of all employers. Since it was the metallurgical industry that was most affected by the strikes it inevitably took a leading role. The number of adherents rose from 533 in 1918 to 4 365 in 1928. But as working class militancy declined employers were no longer obliged to think in terms of collective contracts, so AICA lost a vitality which it fully recovered only after June 1936.

¹⁴⁵ CRCCCL, 1928 pp. 687-93.

¹⁴⁶ E-S. Massoubre, *Les Ententes professionnelles dans le cadre national et la doctrine économique*, Paris, 1935.

¹⁴⁷ On the foundation of AICA see the interview with Aymé Bernard in Georges Lefranc, *Les organisations patronales en France du passé au présent*, Paris, 1976.

Nevertheless, AICA remained an alternative focus of employer loyalty, not least because of its affiliation to the CGPF. Attenders at its meetings included many of the Rhône's most important businessmen.¹⁴⁸ But it is in its bureau that its orientation was clearest. In 1928 five out of seven members can be identified. The two secretaries were patronal functionaries—Bernard was a lawyer, and Johannès Dupraz was a journalist and one time manager of Radio Lyon. Two were members of the CSIM, including Vice-president Edmond Weitz. Interestingly the silk industry was represented by two of its most advanced members: Paul Charbin and Etienne Fougère.¹⁴⁹

In sum, employers in the engineering industry were moving tentatively towards a democratic corporatism. There were no direct connections with *Redressement français*, apart from the presence of Fougère in the leadership of AICA. But there were clearly programmatic links. They are explained partly by economic interest, for as Table 3 shows labour costs in the various metallurgical branches were relatively low. Furthermore, the engineering industry suffered from a serious shortage of skilled labour, which was one reason for the collective contract of 1928. On the other hand labour costs in the embroidery of luxury silks, characterized by conservatism, were very high.

Table 3: Proportion of labour costs in retail price in selected industries¹⁵⁰

Dyeing	4%	Wood	50%
Lead	7%	Building	50%
Copper	8%	Coal mines	46%
Watch-making	15%	Iron mines	50%
Engineering	25%	Hand embroidery	90%

But this is not the only explanation. Labour costs in large weaving and dyeing factories were also low, yet many bosses in these sectors maintained an intransigent opposition to social reform. This brings us back to the question of ideology. Whereas the most important families of silk merchants were more likely to show a continuity stretching back into the mainly Catholic patronat of the nineteenth century, the roots of the engineering patronat were in the anti-clerical petty-bourgeoisie of the last quarter of the century.¹⁵¹ Edmund Weitz is a special case, for like the enterprising textile manufacturer Hippolyte Simler in J-R. Bloch's novel *Et compagnie*, his family

¹⁴⁸ Mulsant, president of the Chamber of Commerce of Villefranche, representatives of the big banks, the PLM and also of agriculture in the person of Felix Garcin of the USE.

¹⁴⁹ *Nouvelliste*, 26-2-1928.

¹⁵⁰ PVCCL, 18-2-1929. For the car industry Sylvie Schweitzer, op. cit., suggests 4%. For the artificial fibre industry it can be estimated at 30%.

¹⁵¹ P. Cayez, 'Quelques aspects du patronat lyonnais pendant la deuxième étape de l'industrialisation', in M. Lévy-Leboyer (ed.) *Le Patronat de la seconde industrialisation*, Paris, 1979. Pinol, *Mobilités et immobilismes*, pp. 685-7.

was of Alsatian and Protestant origin.¹⁵² As we saw in Chapter one neo-capitalism reinforced ideological cleavages in the ruling class.

In the interwar years engineers were still marked by the Republican anti-clerical tradition. Although a second generation immigrant, Edmund Weitz never accepted the hegemony of the *fabrique*, which he referred to as a 'féodalité industrielle', an expression with both Republican and Saint-Simonian overtones.¹⁵³ We shall see in Chapter five that engineering employers had an affinity to the *Alliance démocratique*, of which Edmund Weitz was departmental President. That the Catholic forgemaster Louis Prénat felt the need to create a *Syndicat catholique de la métallurgie et de la construction métallique* is revealing of the atmosphere pervading the main association of engineering employers.¹⁵⁴ So the reformism of engineers was simultaneously political and economic.

There were, to be sure, exceptions to these patterns. But they tend to prove the rule that religion and economics were in practice inseparable. Marius Berliet, although an adept of American industrial methods, was a Legitimist. This is explained by his background in a family of moderately prosperous ribbon makers of the Croix Rousse, which was faithful to the Petite Eglise, a sect which opposed the Napoleonic Concordat.¹⁵⁵ Another example is provided by a small minority of leftist *fabricants non-usiniers*, such as Joseph Fructus, Eugène Schulz and B. J. Van Gelder. The two latter were of foreign origin; Schulz was a Protestant. These merchants, as we shall see, saw collaboration with the Radicals as a means of preserving the artisanate on which they depended. They also, as Schulz put it, represented a 'liberal bourgeoisie', which recognized the dependence of commerce upon the purchasing power of the masses.¹⁵⁶

Conflict in the Chamber of Commerce

Open conflict in the employers' movement was rare. Yet in the late 1920s it is possible to detect a new self-assertiveness on the part of new industries in the Chambers of Commerce of both Lyon and Villefranche. In 1928 discussions began on the subject of reform of the Villefranche chamber, a body dominated by liberal-conservative wine and textile merchants. The stated intention was to take account of the increased importance of industries which had expanded during the war.¹⁵⁷ However, the project submitted to the government did little to alter the status quo. The proposals of retail-

152 J.-R. Bloch, *Et Compagnie*, quoted in Claude Fohlen, 'The industrial Revolution in France, 1700-1914', in C. Cipolla, (ed.), *The Fontana Economic History of Europe*, vol.4, part 1, London, 1973, pp. 38-9. On the rôle of Alsaciens in Lyon see Pinol, *Mobilités et immobilismes*, pp. 467-8.

153 *Nouvelliste*, 28-1-1928.

154 The Prénat family was an old Catholic family. Its steelmaking plant were more labour intensive than engineering concerns.

155 Saint-Loup, op. cit., passim.

156 *Bulletin mensuel du commerce, de l'industrie et de l'agriculture*, January-March, 1928.

157 CRCCV, 29-8-1928: categories which had grown in importance were said to be cotton trading, clothing, cotton dressings, wine, food, metallurgy, cars, agricultural equipment and retailing. That is, virtually every activity in the town—a clear attempt at mystification.

ers' representatives were on the grounds that the prosperity of the region depended on big firms. Also rejected was the Conseil d'état's opinion that a fresh category be created for new industries. Ultimately the government bowed to the Chamber's view that it would be best to incorporate new industries into existing categories. The result was that little changed: there were now two engineers in a chamber of fifteen instead of one out of twelve.¹⁵⁸

In June 1929 Edmund Weitz began to lobby in the name of the 'heavy industries' for a seat in the bureau of the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon.¹⁵⁹ Seven months later, on the occasion of the renewal of the bureau, Weitz asked permission to read a declaration. He was refused by a majority of the Chamber. The vote over, Weitz was permitted to have his say:

Nous trouvons en effet très légitime, que l'industrie de la soie qui reste l'industrie dominante de cette ville soit, d'une façon permanente et en quelque sorte traditionnelle, représentée au Bureau par un membre marchand de soie et par un membre fabrique de tissus.

Mais nous rappelons que les industries lourdes: Métallurgie, Mécanique, Electromécanique, Automobile, Industrie extractive et Bâtiment, représentent pour la circonscription de la Chambre de Commerce de Lyon un chiffre d'affaires qui atteint 2 milliards et payent 500 milliards de salaires. Il nous paraissait donc légitime, qu'un Siège leur soit réservé au Bureau. Vous avez été pressenti, Monsieur le Président, vous ne l'avez pas pensé.

Weitz concluded by stating that he had withdrawn his candidature in the interests of unity. It is more likely that Paul Charbin, among the more advanced of *fabricants*, had been put forward as a compromise candidate.¹⁶⁰ This interpretation is supported by the probability that Weitz was behind a coup in 1932 in which Morel-Journal was replaced as First Vice-president by Charbin.¹⁶¹

This incident confirms the interpretation of business politics put forward in this chapter. Weitz was backed by AICA. In 1934 Morel-Journal listed among his principal grievances against Weitz, his 'attaches trop marquées avec l'envahissant Aymé Bernard, directeur de l'AICA'.¹⁶² And when Morel-Journal finally became president in January 1934, it was 'malgré la répugnance de l'AICA'.¹⁶³

It is also noticeable that the point of view of merchant-manufacturers was not aired in this or any other Chamber of Commerce debate. No-one dissented from Paul Charbin's attacks on home weavers. Given that no *fabricant non-usinier* sat in the Chamber, and that they were even excluded from the leadership of the SFS, this is not surprising. Nevertheless, criticism of modern industrial methods came from three sources. Firstly from representatives of those consumption industries whose conditions of production resembled those of the old fabrique. Thus Antoine Celle favoured

¹⁵⁸ CRCCV, 28-12-1928, 19-6-1929, 30-10-1929, 27-11-1929.

¹⁵⁹ Morel-Journal, *Journal*, 14-6-1929. Confirmed by Weitz, PVCCL, 6-1-1930. Weitz told Morel-Journal that he had refused a political candidature susceptible of leading to the Town Hall of Lyon in order to orientate his life towards presidency of the Chamber of Commerce.

¹⁶⁰ PVCCL, 6-1-1930; Morel-Journal, *Journal*, 12-1-1932. Charbin obtained seventeen votes, Weitz three and there were three abstentions.

¹⁶¹ Morel-Journal, *Journal*, 12-1-1932; PVCCL, 12-1-1932.

¹⁶² Morel-Journal, *Journal*, 2-5-1934.

¹⁶³ Morel-Journal, *Journal*, 23-1-1934. Fougère, its president, however, appears to have seen Morel-Journal as acceptable.

economy in labour costs, the use of bonuses and a wise division of labour. But he also felt that 'he who desired the integral application of American methods in French factories would commit the same stupid error as the farmer of the Nord who wanted to grow cotton on his land'. On behalf of his own leather goods industry he bemoaned the trend towards rubber soles and mass production.¹⁶⁴ Since Celle was also speaking as President of the Chamber his views are also symptomatic of the ambivalent attitude towards mass production of large silk firms.¹⁶⁵

Second, August Isaac defended high quality production in the silk industry. Through his occupation of lucrative directorships such as the Compagnie de Suez and the PLM Isaac was a representative of finance capital. But he was distinguished from this milieu by his great age and by family connections with medium sized family silk firms which were fearful of big firms.¹⁶⁶ Isaac agreed that the French consumer could not be compared to the American, and that the chief advantage of Lyon in the world market was the cheapness of its highly skilled labour force.¹⁶⁷ Thirdly, the point of view of *fabricants non-usiniers* was expressed through the *Fédération Républicaine*, which from the late 1920s was under the control of Victor Perret, President of the silk braid and church ornament section of the SFS, Perret owed something to traditional liberalism, but emphasized a form of neo-corporatism designed to protect skilled labour. In this he found some support even from a guardian of the liberal tradition like Auguste Isaac, but most importantly from certain white collar workers.¹⁶⁸

Finally, mention must be made of the attitude of small business. In both the 1928 and 1932 incidents in the Chamber of Commerce Michel Delzeux, representative of the retail trade, supported Edmund Weitz. More often this sector could be relied upon to toe the majority line. The position of small business was then ambiguous. Its main representative, the *Alliance des Chambres Syndicales* (ACS) enjoyed a rather cosy relationship with big business in the Chamber of Commerce. It always collaborated with the big business *Union des chambres syndicales* (UCS) in presenting candidates for professional elections and was itself led by relatively large retailers.

Thus liberal individualism incorporated elements of the leadership of the small business movement, and indeed of the Radical Party, of which Delzeux was an influential member.¹⁶⁹ Yet the reach of liberal individualism was limited. There is much evidence of small business anti-capitalism, and of friction with big business. Antoine Celle, complained that small cobblers had associated in order to market their products, expressing the (liberal) fear that this would merely extend the trade of some at

¹⁶⁴ See pp. 70 and 81.

¹⁶⁵ CRCCCL, 1928, pp. 360-9.

¹⁶⁶ Auguste Isaac's son Humbert was managing director of Dognin et Cie which had 137 looms in 1935. See Chapter 8.

¹⁶⁷ Isaac, op. cit., pp. 91-92.

¹⁶⁸ Isaac, op. cit., pp. 91-2. In this timid questioning of the free play of market forces Isaac is typical. See p. 96.

¹⁶⁹ Remember also Edouard Herriot's own liberalism in financial questions and his good relations with Morel-Journel.

the expense of others.¹⁷⁰ The struggle between small and large production is best seen in the long-term failure of businessmen and small producers to agree a legal definition of the artisan.¹⁷¹

There was then a battle for the allegiance of small producers, which involved anti-capitalist sectional associations, a liberal Radical leadership, the reformist and the liberal wings of business, and as we shall see a traditionalist current in the *Fédération républicaine*. It goes without saying that this conflict cannot be understood separately from the religious issue. One of the few occasions on which Michel Delzeux criticized the leadership of the Chamber of Commerce was for granting a subsidy to an exhibition mounted by a group of Catholic employers. Some of the same tensions can be seen in the relationship of white collar workers to the right.

*The CFTC: A stalking horse for the left?*¹⁷²

There is much more to conservatism than the history of the elites. In fact the right recruited from all social classes and reproduced within itself, with an altered balance of power, all the tensions of society at large. An exchange between Auguste Isaac and the CFTC reveals the deep social and political gulf which separated elements of the conservative coalition:

Vous [La CFTC] partagez avec les syndicats socialistes cette conviction que le patron est toujours riche et fait toujours de bonnes affaires. [...] Ne vois-je pas à chaque instant mes filles obligées de faire elles-mêmes la cuisine? Ne savez-vous pas que la plupart des bonnes ne veulent plus garder les enfants la nuit? La crise des domestiques est non pas moins aiguë que celle du logement. L'une et l'autre ont des causes multiples, mais au fond desquelles on retrouve toujours la loi du moindre effort.¹⁷³

This amounted to a class struggle within the right. For whatever Isaac may have felt, the CFTC's official apoliticism meant in practice visceral anti-communism and support for Raymond Poincaré.¹⁷⁴

CFTC influence was largest among white collar workers, who in turn constituted the greatest proportion of right wing voters. Growth of new types of salaried employment between capital and labour was a classic consequence of the Second Industrial Revolution. In his examination of electoral lists in Lyon and Villeurbanne from 1896 to 1936, J-L. Pinol divides these categories into three. First, the proportion

170 CRCCL, 1828, p.718. Bonneville, op.cit., p.49: Master-weavers of silk lace in Villeurbanne attempted to escape the grip of *fabricants* by organising themselves into a cooperative. Shopkeepers meanwhile resented the attempts of factory owners to reduce their wage bills by setting up purchasing cooperatives in their factories, and railed against the new *prix unics* (CRCCL, 1828, p.728-9).

171 The crux of the matter was that the wider the definition, the larger would be the class of producers who stood to benefit from tax concessions and exemption from social legislation. Thus, while 'true' artisans agreed with big business that the employment of only one *compagnon* should be allowed, small businesses lobbied for a maximum of ten. Also, the big business was opposed to the inclusion of shopkeepers in the new organisms.

172 The CFTC was constituted nationally on 1/2 November, 1919. A regional organization of the CFTC was set up in Lyon on 14 March, 1920. M. Launay, 'Le syndicalisme chrétien en France, 1885 à 1940', *thèse d'état*, Paris, 1980, pp. 1368 ff.

173 Auguste Isaac, Open letter to the CFTC. The CFTC had denounced Isaac's plan, as Minister of Commerce, to reform the Eight Hour Law. *La Voix Sociale*, 29-7-1922.

174 *La Voix Sociale*, February, 1926. For Maurice Guérin, one of the most advanced, 'le marxisme est une erreur économique et sociale. Cela, c'est notre cheval de bataille. [...] La propriété privée individuelle et familiale est sacrée'.

of senior managers and engineers in the electorate grew from 5% to 7%. Secondly, 'middle managers' (cadres moyennes) increased from 2% to 7% per cent. Lastly, the fortunes of 'routine' white collar workers (shop assistants, office workers and those described in the electoral list simply as *employés*) are more complex. This category grew in absolute and percentage terms from 1896 to 1911; between the wars there was a stabilization of numbers but a relative decline.¹⁷⁵ Thus the tendency in the early twentieth century was a moderate growth of salaried non-manual employment as a whole, which was accompanied by internal differentiation.

Given that definition of white collar employment is highly problematic it is as well to make clear that senior managers and engineers are excluded from the following discussion because they scarcely played an autonomous role in conservative politics before 1936, doubtless because of a close identification with the patronat.¹⁷⁶ We are more concerned by J-L. Pinol's second two categories, which to some extent can be differentiated in the sources. They also correspond to a distinction made by Erik Olin Wright. On the one hand there are those higher grade workers who whilst dependent on a wage share some of the delegated authority of the capitalist. On the other there are those routine white collar workers whose position is analogous to that of the proletariat.¹⁷⁷

The central question is the increasingly problematic incorporation of white collar workers into the liberal consensus on the right. First the transmission of the dominant liberal ideology to white collar workers will be examined, then the challenge to liberalism represented by the CFTC.

Liberalism and white collar workers

In the early nineteenth century clerks in the silk industry had traditionally been conservative.¹⁷⁸ This is hardly surprising in a period when a limited educational system was monopolized by the Church, and when the premium commanded by literacy ensured economic privilege. In the 1920s deferential conservatism survived, especially among white collar workers in the silk industry——partly because of the resilience of the liberal notion of the career open to talent.

A certain prestige was attached to employment in the silk industry. Jean Dufourt has Philippe naively refer to the 'appointements royaux' of some of his fellow employees:

[...] Quand je leur parlais ainsi, ils croyaient que je me moquais d'eux. Puis devant mon visage sans malice, ils daignaient m'éclairer. « Nous ne sommes point, me disaient-ils, parmi les privilégiés de ce monde. Nous passons tous par la filière et nos appointements sont des plus médiocres, mais nous sommes chez Grivolin, chez Taffarel et chez Bernicot! ». Ce « mais » me semblait alors incompréhensible, inexplicable, car j'ignorais tout de la considération. Au-

¹⁷⁵ Pinol, *Mobilismes et immobilismes*, 456-7. The figures quoted are read from a graph, and are therefore inexact.

¹⁷⁶ A Catholic organization, the *Union Sociale des ingénieurs chrétiens* existed, but its membership was small and some were employers.

¹⁷⁷ These arguments are taken from Eric Olin Wright, *Capital, Crisis and the State*, London, 1978, pp. 61-97. I shall not discuss the special case of state employees, who played little part in the right.

jourd'hui, je le traduis avec assurance: « Mais... nous sommes chez des patrons hautement considérés, et la considération du maître est à la fois le pain quotidien et l'orgueil du serviteur. »¹⁷⁹

This quotation suggests a tacit agreement. Employees accepted mediocre salaries in return for the chance to work their way up through the firm (passer par la filière).¹⁸⁰ At the end of the novel Philippe himself becomes a partner in Calixte's own silk lace firm, having married one of the proprietor's relatives.

It has already been seen that social mobility in the *fabrique de soieries* was more than a myth.¹⁸¹ There is hardly any profession', writes Michel Laferrère, 'in which employees so quickly become partners, or where one has as many chances to set up on one's own'.¹⁸² Social mobility was real enough to provide several well-publicized examples. François Peissel had begun his working life in a silk packaging factory and ended it as a *commissionnaire en soieries* and Federation deputy. This example is especially relevant because in his youth Peissel had been a trade unionist. He never lost contact with the CFTC, and in the 1936 legislature presided over a group of deputies friendly to it.¹⁸³

Dissemination of liberal values was facilitated by close contact of silk employees with their bosses. Offices of fabricants were generally modest, even dingy, affairs. Miron, Philippe's employer, occupied 'a kind of monk's cell which served him as an office', at the back of a high-ceilinged and bare-walled room, in which employees of all conditions busied themselves.¹⁸⁴ Identification with the employer was also encouraged by the patronat's conscious effort to disseminate a model of behaviour.¹⁸⁵

Influence of liberal ideology in other sectors is more difficult to assess, and a subject for further research. But we do know that in the 1920s it was still common for bookkeepers and especially travelling salesmen to become self-employed. Similarly, a writer in *La Voix Sociale* argued that travelling salesmen, because of the conditions in which they worked, were too independently minded to join a union where they would merely 'soldiers in an army'.¹⁸⁶

The possibility of rising to a senior position and perhaps ultimately of setting up on one's own implied adhesion (at least outwardly) to the outlook of the patronat. These values often included Catholicism as well as liberalism. This is perhaps one

178 As their recruitment by *fabricants* to aid in the suppression of the revolt of the canuts of 1834 illustrates.

179 Dufourt, op. cit., pp. 58-9.

180 In fact, white collar workers in the silk industry received better than average, though scarcely excessive, salaries. Philippe is also told by his employer that his diploma in Advanced Commercial Studies does not prove that he is fitted to succeed in commerce: 'il fallait, comme les autres, « passer par la filière »'. Ibid p. 27-8.

181 See page 74.

182 Laferrère, op. cit., pp. 97-8. Jean-Luc Pinol's study of the relationship between age and occupation also supports the hypothesis of exceptional upward mobility among white collar workers in the industry. (Pinol, *Espace sociale*, p. 51).

183 P.Gric, op. cit.; interview with M. Roger Fulchiron.

184 Dufourt, op. cit., p. 27. In 1987 I visited the office of a multi-national silk firm, which conformed almost exactly to Dufourt's description. On the wall was an allegorical painting entitled 'Rien sans peine'.

185 See page 75.

186 *La Voix Sociale*, May, 1929: Continually on the move, 'évoluant un peu dans tous les milieux, sans trop en subir l'empreint', his broad mind demanded an organization which would preserve this freedom of action.

reason for high religious practice among white collar workers.¹⁸⁷ A rare insight into hiring policy comes from a study of the Trayvou engineering factory at La Mulatière. It was said that it was sufficient to signal one's piety to managing director Berthelon in order to be sure of employment.¹⁸⁸ It is surely significant that about a dozen employees of Trayvou turn up in the *Fédération républicaine*, of whom the majority were white collar workers.

Furthermore, Catholic values could be seen as aiding in the accumulation of the savings needed to set up on one's own, or simply for a comfortable retirement. The CFTC press describes its own adherents as 'sober and hard-working', and is full of tirades against a society which worshipped only pleasure.¹⁸⁹ That such views were often expressed in the context of attacks on the left suggests the inextricability of Catholicism, present or future status and political outlook. For white collar workers Catholicism and conservatism were quite simply the same thing. Hence the difficulties experienced by conservatives in convincing their supporters that defence against socialism required transcendence of 'sterile quarrels'.¹⁹⁰

It follows from this that deference to Catholic-liberal notables was dependent on the maintenance of a favourable economic climate and on the goodwill of the Church. And given the connection of religion and economics rebellion against elite leadership was likely to remain within certain limits.

The Emergence of the CFTC

The idea of the career open to talent was, as the quotation from Guérin suggests, influential in the CFTC.¹⁹¹ Yet Catholic unions also stressed the interests of employees as a category, although this was not incompatible with protection of promotion prospects. Changes in the social structures, in the nature of white collar work, and in the social practice of the Church came together to explain the new emphasis.

Jean-Luc Pinol shows that before 1914 the expansion of white collar employment provided openings for sons of workers and shopkeepers.¹⁹² White collar workers themselves had a significant chance of becoming merchants, and were protected against downward mobility. In the interwar period social structures became more

187 Note the quasi-religious images of the final sentence in the quotation from Dufourt: master, servant, daily bread...

188 F. Robert, 'Trayvou 1909-39. Qualification, rationalisation et mobilité ouvrière', *mémoire de maîtrise*, Lyon II, 1986. Thanks to François Robert for allowing me to see the interviews on which his study was based.

189 *La Voix sociale*, July-August, 1926: he continued, 'vieilles et vieux se rajeunissent pour s'asseoir plus commodément au banquet de la joie factice. Cheveux coupés des unes, têtes efféminées des autres; décolletés outrageantes, bras nus et pantalons éblouissants: tout cela, c'est la livrée des esclaves du dieu plaisir. L'idéale de toute femme réputée est de copier la courtisane. Tout homme distingué veut avoir l'air d'un comique de casino'.

190 See chapter two.

191 *La Voix Sociale*, 1-1-1922. One writer argued that since in France every soldier carried a marshal's baton in his knapsack, and because most bosses had risen from the workforce, there could be no class struggle. Another denied that it was a 'crime' to become a patron (*La Voix Sociale*, 21-6-1925). Courses in bookkeeping, languages etc. were offered by the CFTC in order to facilitate career moves.

192 This and the following paragraph relies on J-L. Pinol, *Mobilités et immobilismes*, especially pp. 620-639, and 669-696.

rigid. Expansion of white collar employment ended, at least as far as males were concerned. So there were fewer opportunities for working class self-improvement. Whilst a few white collar workers became commercial representatives or technicians, the chance of becoming an employer had almost disappeared. Higher education had now become the main route to a career in business, something which was open only to sons of the bourgeoisie.¹⁹³ Descent into the factory proletariat was rarely the fate of white collar workers, but was nevertheless a possibility. In sum, an interwar white collar worker was more likely to have been born to a white collar family, and would probably remain a white collar worker all his life.

Meanwhile white collar work became more subdivided and bureaucratic. A CFTC bank worker wrote of employees 'Maintenues dans une situation de misère, cantonnés dans une spécialisation qui les laissent ignorantes des problèmes financières, ils sont le troupeau auquel on fait suer des fortunes pour les autres'.¹⁹⁴ Typically, this quasi-marxist analysis of the alienation of 'prolétaires en faux-col et en veston', was associated with protestations of probity, conscientiousness and fidelity to capitalism--another illustration of the ambiguity of white-collar consciousness.¹⁹⁵ It could be that bureaucratization was associated with a growth in female white collar work, so status was also tied up with hostility to female employment. This throws light on the CFTC's preoccupation with the return of women to the home.

All of this coincided with the formation of the CFTC in 1919. In Lyon there was a strong tradition of social Catholicism, though its preoccupations and goals were diverse and sometimes contradictory. On the one hand there was a conservative, once monarchist, tendency. Its most lasting product was the *Corporation des employés de soierie*, created in 1886, which was the first explicitly Catholic syndicate in France. It was the sole survivor of a tripartite body through which it had been intended to associate merchants, weavers and employees.¹⁹⁶ This wing of the social Catholic movement was linked to the *Oeuvre des cercles*, founded in response to the Commune by Albert de Mun.

Also created at the turn of the century were Mme. Rochebilliard's *Syndicats professionnels féminins*. Her movement, the first female Catholic Union in France, at first shared the relatively progressive views of the *Chronique*, and was even tempted by the CGT. But lack of interest of the latter in female workers pushed it to the right.¹⁹⁷

193 In J-L Pinol's first cohort (born 1872-75) 19% of sons of the bourgeoisie went into higher education. In the second cohort (born 1898 to 1900) 53% did so. Figures for all other groups are 3% and 7% respectively.

194 *La Voix sociale*, 21-6-1925.

195 *La Voix sociale*, 23-8-1925.

196 *La Voix Sociale*, July/August, 1926; Ponson, op. cit., p.176.

197 Ponson, op. cit., p. 165; Rouillet, op. cit. passim.

More progressive was the *Chronique sociale*, whose role in the promotion of peasant consciousness has already been mentioned.¹⁹⁸ Since the *Chronique* found the majority of its sympathizers among white collar workers, it was a natural step for it to form a white collar union in 1912. Like the Corporation, it was affiliated on the national level to the *Syndicat des employés de commerce et de l'industrie* which was to form the core of the CFTC.¹⁹⁹ Re-formation of Catholic trades unions after the war was the work of the *Chronique*. Secretary-general Marius Gonin set up a secretariat for this purpose, and recruited the journalist Maurice Guérin to head it.²⁰⁰ Not without difficulty Guérin managed to unite the two wings of social Catholicism. But the equivocal heritage of social Catholicism continued to divide the CFTC. This can be seen in both its sociology and ideology.

It is necessary to begin by qualifying the picture of a movement dominated by white collar workers. In 1922 women represented at least 68% of CFTC members.²⁰¹ This is not at all typical of the CFTC nationally, and is perhaps due to the precocious implantation of female unions in Lyon.²⁰² Many female adherents were engaged in manufacturing, especially textiles and clothing. But women played a subordinate role in the CFTC: all departmental leaders were male, and most of them were white collar workers. Female unions showed few signs of vitality. Of the male manual unions only that in engineering had more than a sporadic existence, but with only fifty-four members in the region in 1922 it was numerically insignificant beside white collar unions.

Since they were the backbone of the CFTC it will be necessary to look at the latter in more detail. Women were organized in the quaintly named *Syndicat des dames employées*, while men adhered to the *Union syndicale des employés de la région lyonnaise*. Both recruited (in theory) from all branches, except that the venerable Corporation formed an autonomous group.

An idea of the CFTC's social base can be obtained from elections to Prud'homme councils in the arrondissement of Lyon.²⁰³ Before 1935 the CFTC presented candidates only for the two sections of the commercial colleges. In the first section, grouping travelling salesmen, bookkeepers, and bank employees, the CFTC was usually defeated by a CGT-CGTU cartel.²⁰⁴ The CGT's best performance was in the banks, whilst the CFTC could count on the backing of bookkeepers and travelling

198 *La Chronique Sociale* was a revue, organ of the *Secretariat Social* and of the *Fédération des groupes d'études sociales*.

199 Ponson, op. cit., passim; Roulet op. cit., passim. These were not the only conservative or Catholic organizations. There was also a *Union fraternelle des employés de commerce*, its name suggesting links with Léon Harmel. It did not adhere to the CFTC.

200 On the recruitment of Guérin see M. Launay, *thèse*, pp. 1377-1384.

201 A list of affiliated unions can be found in Appendix 3. See also Launay, *thèse*, pp. 1465-1469. The membership figures quoted here refer to individuals who regularly paid their dues.

202 Launay, *thèse*, p. 1488. Women were also over-represented in the region, but accounted for only 33% of the total.

203 Results can be found in *La Voix sociale*.

204 The only CFTC victory was in 1929, and was due to the right's election victory in 1928, and the sectarianism of the communists.

salesmen, as well as of a substantial minority of bank employees.²⁰⁵ In the second section, in which the sales staff of the *grands magasins* and the office workers of the silk industry voted, a cartel of CFTC and its independent allies were some distance ahead of the CGT. The main source of CFTC votes was the *soierie*, while department stores supported the left.

In Lyon as elsewhere in France, the CFTC presented no candidates in the white collar colleges of industrial sections. Only among technical staff in the engineering and building industries did Catholic trades unions possess a small core of activists. Most likely they had been recruited from former students of the *Ecole d'apprentissage supérieure*, which had been founded jointly in 1920 by the CFTC and abbé Lamache, and which began to produce its first graduates in the mid-1920s.²⁰⁶ Most were destined for the engineering, electrical and building industries, sectors which provided the members of a sub-section of the *employé* union of the CFTC, set up in 1927.²⁰⁷

The overall picture is confirmed by a 1929 report which stated that recruitment was satisfactory among VRP, bookkeepers and draughtsmen, but less so in the banks, the engineering industry, and department stores.²⁰⁸ Michel Launay's conclusion that the Catholic unions were most influential among proletarianized 'petits employés' does not apply to Lyon.²⁰⁹ CFTC support came disproportionately from higher grade employees. Some leaders would today be considered to be managers: Raoul Duclos of the white collar union, was chief accountant in a silk firm.²¹⁰

It is hardly surprising that routine clerical and commercial employees should be attracted preferentially to the CGT. But apart from economic interest, milieu plays a part, for the loyalty of white collar workers in the industrial sector to the CGT could perhaps be explained by dispersal in proletarian areas. CFTC activists were drawn from white collar workers inhabiting the central areas where there was a strong bourgeois presence, or from 'mixed' areas around the city centre.²¹¹

This is important, for unlike the CGT, CFTC activism was not based on the enterprise but on the parish. Many recruits were furnished by the parish-based *Groupes d'études sociales*, part of the *Chronique sociale's* mini-empire:²¹² relations were so close that in 1926 fusion of CFTC and *Cercles* was envisaged. In May of the

205 In 1937 *La Voix Sociale* described the banks as one of only two white collar sectors which supported the CGT before the upheaval of June 1936. The Société Générale was an exception, for in elections to the governing body of its insurance fund, the CFTC gained 61 votes against 45 to the CGT and 12 to independents. Perhaps significantly, the staff of this bank were among the last to join the 1925 strike. *La Voix Sociale*, November, 1925.

206 Launay, *thèse*, pp. 1508-9.

207 *La Voix sociale*, July/August, 1930.

208 *La Voix Sociale*, November, 1929.

209 M. Launay, *La CFTC, Origines et développement, 1919-1940*, Paris, 1986, p. 241.

210 Launay, *thèse*, p. 1407.

211 This hypothesis is supported by the geographical implantation of CFTC-*employés*. Its strongest sections were in Perrache, Bellecour and the Croix Rousse. *La Voix Sociale*, March/April, 1926.

212 For example, Georges Forestier, general secretary of the white collar union, had been a participant in the *groupe d'études* of St Pierre des Terreaux, where he introduced Claudius Dériol to the *Chronique*.

same year, one study group voted to transform itself into a section of the CFTC white collar union.²¹³ Only rarely did the CFTC possess an enterprise section. The exception was in certain of the big banks, thanks to the coincidence of a large number of employees with favourable parish circumstances. Comparison with the white collar membership of the PDP, which overlapped with that of the CFTC, suggests that just as many came from smaller banks, where bosses were notorious for their hostility to unions of any tint.²¹⁴ The importance of parish structures to the CFTC also emerges from the fact that its more conservative wing, essentially the silk employees of *Corporation*, drew support from the *Oeuvre des cercles* in the Croix Rousse. It can therefore be concluded that sociological factors, together with the general social programme of the Church made Catholic trades unionism possible, but the ideological and sociological mix in the parishes determined the ideological direction of Catholic trades unionism. Both wings of the CFTC must be seen as responses to the same economic problems.

It should also be clear that militants were very much *Catholic* trades unionists. Since they were also disproportionately higher grade workers it is possible again to see the inextricability of Catholicism, status and conservatism. In the CFTC the hope of social mobility gave way to protection of acquired position, striking thus at the heart of the liberal consensus. This was true of both left and right wings of the movement. Unavoidably this had a political impact, not least because CFTC, *Chronique* and *Oeuvre des cercles* were all part of a network which also included the *Fédération républicaine* and the PDP.²¹⁵ As in the JAC there is a potential ambiguity in the CFTC's attitude to religion, for in order to disseminate their Catholic view of the social question, the CFTC was ready to put aside doctrinal questions and collaborate with the communists. The result was the same combination of Catholicism and secularism which paved the way for the *Croix de Feu*.

The Ambiguities of Social Catholicism

In the 1920s the majority view in the CFTC was supported by the white collar and engineering federations. Its most lucid exponent was Maurice Guérin.²¹⁶ Contrary to the propaganda of the CGT and CGTU, the CFTC was not a bosses' union. It defended the Eight Hour Law and agitated for social insurance institutions free from patronal control. The CFTC was particularly keen to defend the right of workers to a weekly rest day, and to ensure that salaries were high enough to encourage women to stay at home. On issues such as these the Christian trades unions were prepared to

²¹³ Launay, *thèse*, p. 1515-6.

²¹⁴ *La Voix Sociale*, 15-7-1923, May 1927: 'La pratique [du] devoir syndical est souvent liée à la compréhension de ce devoir par les patrons catholiques eux-mêmes'.

²¹⁵ See Chapter 6.

²¹⁶ *La Voix Sociale*, 20-1-1924; Launay, *La CFTC*, p. 24. Guérin left Lyon for a national post in 1927, but returned during the war. Hostilities over, he headed a successful MRP list in the 1945 elections.

collaborate with the CGT and CGTU, although the CFTC remained firm in its hostility to communism as an ideology.²¹⁷ For the CFTC class conflict was to be contained by index linking of wages and institutionalized under the control of the state through a system of compulsory syndicalization and collective bargaining. Class struggle was an inevitable feature of modern society, but it did not have to be pursued to the death.²¹⁸

There is no need to dwell on the incompatibility of such ideas with Lyonnais liberalism.²¹⁹ The CFTC did not talk in terms of 'classlessness', but saw classes as a fact of life. Equally apparent is that this democratic corporatism met at significant points with the ideas of modernising businessmen. Maurice Guérin welcomed rationalization as a means of diminishing the difficulty of work and of reducing the cost of goods—as long as the 'organized profession' ensured that harmful consequences were kept to a minimum.²²⁰ The CFTC could boast some practical success, for along with the CGT it signed the collective contract in the engineering industry in 1928.²²¹

Yet the CFTC was scarcely the natural ally of the often anti-clerical metallurgical patronat. Catholic trades unions, to their annoyance, had at first been excluded from the negotiations for the collective contract of 1928. In what can only be a reference to anti-clericalism a spokesman for engineering draughtsmen denounced the hypocrisy of bosses who permitted marital infidelity and attendance at the cinema, but refused paid holidays.²²²

The Catholic face of the CFTC was reinforced by the survival of an older variety of social Catholicism, which identified defence of religion with the protection of an hierarchical and conservative social order. It was promoted by the *Corporation* of Auguste Gruffaz. Its presence in the CFTC is a little incongruous. Guérin seems to have achieved a united front of Catholic trades unions only at the cost of allowing the *Corporation* to retain its separate existence rather than merge into the white collar federation, and by making Gruffaz regional President. For Michel Launay, the conflict was essentially a misunderstanding. But closer examination reveals a genuine difference.²²³

Gruffaz admitted to a theoretical preference for mixed patron-worker unions over the CFTC formula of independence. He was reluctant to use the term 'syndicate',

217 *La Voix sociale*, January, 1931. The communist federation was frequently more amenable to collaboration than was the anti-clerical CGT, which feared the CFTC as a rival. In March 1924 there was a six hour battle between CGT and CFTC activists at the Salles Grandris in Lyon. Launay, *thèse*, p. 1520.

218 *La Voix Sociale*, December, 1926. Guérin said 'je crois à la lutte des classes et à la paix sociale'.

219 *La Voix Sociale*, 12-3-1922. The main headline of the second issue of *La Voix sociale* (1-2-1922, was 'Le libéralisme économique à l'assaut du syndicalisme chrétien'.

220 *La Voix sociale*, March 1927. Another militant proclaimed that 'le syndicalisme chrétien doit moraliser la rationalisation'. Edmond Weitz, on the other hand, opposed the idea of an 'échelle mobile' in a letter to *La Voix Sociale* (October/November, 1926).

221 See page 82.

222 *La Voix sociale*, October, 1930. Back in 1920 the CFTC had come into conflict with anticlerical yellow unions (the *Confédération nationale du travail*) sponsored by the employers' associations in the building and engineering industries. Launay, *thèse*, pp. 1455-1457.

223 Launay, *thèse*, pp. 1387-8, 1410, 1437-1441.

preferring 'profession' or 'corporation'.²²⁴ He was suspicious of the 'furore' of unrestrained economic progress, which threatened to disorganize these fundamental units of society, as well as ignoring the varied tastes of the French consumer.²²⁵ Thus his understanding of social mobility was a particular one. It did not mean that anyone could become an employer simply because he possessed the necessary capital. Rather one had to learn a trade through a laborious apprenticeship to a particular station.²²⁶ This was understood by Gruffaz's obituarist, who saw his special merit as having remained an *employé* all his life, and never to have desired anything else.²²⁷ Not surprisingly the Corporation did little to improve the conditions of employees. For Gruffaz it was not merely occupancy of a post which should determine a salary, but the competence and moral worth of the person who occupied it. This can also be seen as a rejection of both market and collective determination of wages in favour of a Catholic notion of vocation.

Gruffaz's views are rather close to those *fabricants* who saw corporatism as a defence against the decline of the luxury industries.²²⁸ Gruffaz enjoyed a particularly close relationship with one such employer, Victor Perret, whose own senior employees appeared at meetings of the Corporation. The Corporation remained the 'faithful tenant' of the *Association Catholique des patrons*, which had been presided over in the early 1900s by Perret's father. Gruffaz was also a member of the *Fédération républicaine*, of which Perret junior was President. Again the Church is important, for both Corporation and Federation recruited from groups affiliated to the *Oeuvre de cercles*, which were particularly strong in the Croix Rousse, home of the merchant-manufacturing branch of the silk industry. Maurice Guérin roundly denounced the *Oeuvre des cercles* for denying workers the right to independent organization. They restrained the growth of the CFTC without affecting the CGT.²²⁹ It is then possible to see that amongst a minority in the Croix Rousse, liberal individualism had become corporate self-regulation.

In this relationship between trades union, political party and the parish it is possible to see how the critique of industrialization could merge with a wider suspicion of the modern world. This also involved a resuscitation of the integrist, perhaps Legitimist, strand in the Lyonnais right which had retreated into the Church in the 1870s and 1880s.²³⁰ Cardinal Maurin, Archbishop of Lyon, was himself sympathetic to it. His idea of syndicalism was not dissimilar from that of Gruffaz.²³¹ In the early

²²⁴ *La Voix Sociale*, October 1928, 21-10-23.

²²⁵ *La Voix Sociale*, May, 1927; April, 1930.

²²⁶ *La Voix Sociale*, 16-12-1923, 10-5-1925.

²²⁷ 'Il fut un modèle de fidélité, c'est à dire qu'il fut un employé modèle et ne voulut jamais être autre chose qu'employé [...] parce qu'il jugea les valeurs humaines d'après une autre échelle'. *La Voix sociale*, 1937.

²²⁸ See page 86

²²⁹ *La Voix Sociale*, September/October, 1926 and November, 1929

²³⁰ See Chapter 2.

²³¹ Launay, *La CFTC*, pp. 76-9.

1920s it was rumoured that Maurin had sought papal condemnation of the CFTC.²³² Marius Gonin did his best to facilitate relations between CFTC and Maurin, but the result was that one militant saw him as the 'surveillant du patronat lyonnais et de l'archevêché auprès des syndicats chrétiens'.²³³

To conclude this discussion it is worth asking how influential was the CFTC? The Lyon region is identified by Michel Launay as a bastion of Catholic trades unionism.²³⁴ A report of 1922 reveals that some 1,337 people regularly paid their dues.²³⁵ This figure rose to perhaps 5,000 members in 1935.²³⁶ It is not an insignificant figure, especially as it was concentrated in certain sectors. But it is not large in comparison with the CGT, which had some 30,000 members in the Rhône in 1935.²³⁷ And once the initial enthusiasm of 1919-1920 had worn off, the CFTC experienced the same difficulties as the CGT.²³⁸ Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s *La Voix Sociale* complained of indifference.

On the other hand, given that the 1920s did not provide favourable ground for trades unions of any type, membership should not be equated with real influence. CFTC militants could get themselves heard through the Catholic press, particularly the *Croix du Rhône*. In the bank strike of 1925 the CFTC manifestly spoke for a large number of employees, while elections for Prud'homme councils provided a wider audience.²³⁹

The record of the CFTC in industrial disputes is also mixed. It was formed in a context of anti-Bolshevik paranoia. It did not participate in the *Union Civique*, organized to break the railway strikes of 1920, while the employees federation was active in putting forward the grievances of bank staff. On the other hand, Marius Gonin represented the *Chronique Sociale* in the *Union civique*.²⁴⁰ Some CFTC unions were formed in the classic manner of 'yellow' unions, in the wake of bitter and unsuccessful strikes.²⁴¹

Only the white collar unions ever played an autonomous role in labour relations. And even in this case the CFTC did not regard the strike as a first resort. Collaboration and moral force were preferable. The problem was that few outside the

232 Launay, *thèse*, pp. 1493-1507. The rumour was groundless, but that high level meetings were necessary to dispel any doubts is revealing of the attitudes of some in the hierarchy.

233 *Archives de la Chronique Sociale*, correspondence, 1930, quoted by M. Launay, *La CFTC*, p. 256.

234 M. Launay, *La CFTC*, p. 217.

235 At the same moment the white collar federation claimed 238 members in *La Voix sociale*.

236 M. Launay suggests that in 1929 there were 100 more adherents than in 1922 in the region. *Thèse*, p. 1519. But extrapolation from reliable membership figures for 1937, quoted in *La CFTC*, pp. 401-2, on the basis of the 400% membership increase since 1935 claimed by the CFTC suggest the higher figure given here.

237 Prost, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

238 Launay, *thèse*, pp. 1473-4.

239 In the 1929 Prud'homme elections the CFTC gained 559 votes in the two white collar colleges in which it presented candidates, and together with the reactionary USN, a further 329 in one of the railway categories.

240 ADR, 1m 637. Some independent white collar unions were also involved, including Biard's *Association des employés de commerce et de l'industrie*, which was to contest consular elections in alliance with the CFTC. Participation of the CFTC railwaymen in breaking the strikes was a source of sorrow to Guérin. (Launay, *thèse*, pp. 1422-3, 1448-1452).

241 E. g. the OTL union in 1928, and a textile union in Thizy in 1931.

CFTC, either workers or bosses, set much store by negotiation. Unable to impose its own original line, the CFTC tended to oscillate between patronal and workers' positions.²⁴² But if the CFTC's success in its own sphere was limited, we shall see that its ideas and the social forces to which it gave coherence had a definite political impact.

Conclusion

Maurice Moissonnier and André Boulmier argue that the creation of the *Union Civique* in 1919 marked a decisive stage in the formation of a monopoly capitalist bourgeoisie in Lyon. It dominated the petty bourgeoisie, and with Auguste Isaac as Minister of Commerce, it was closely linked to the state.²⁴³ It is true that postwar working class unrest provoked an impressive display of ruling class unity. Yet we have seen that by the end of the decade that unity was threatened. Even the formation of the *Union Civique* itself must be seen as an episode in the battle for hegemony within the ruling class. Although it united the Chamber of Commerce, the *Chronique* and AICA, the initiative had been taken by the CSIM President Tobie Rebatel. AICA also played a leading part.

By the end of the 1920s it is possible to speak of a crisis of the liberal tradition of Lyon. Big businessmen like Henry Morel-Journel invoked liberal principles when home weaving or trades unionism was at issue. But he was also an enthusiastic supporter of cartels. His commitment to mass production helped to undermine the unity of the silk industry. Merchant-manufacturers and medium factory owners in the silk industry were beginning to see corporatism as an alternative means of preserving individual initiative and skill on which flexible-production depended. In this they were backed by the conservative wing of the CFTC. Meanwhile elements in the metallurgical industry ~~were~~ were moving towards social democracy similar to that of the CFTC. The following chapters will examine the political aspects of these changes.

²⁴² *La Voix Sociale*, 25-10-1925: After the unsuccessful bank strike of 1925 Guérin asked rhetorically: 'Pourquoi nous acharner à offrir aux patrons une collaboration qu'ils refusent obstinément? Pourquoi ne pas entrer résolument dans la lutte des classes dont on nous a donné un exemple parfait du côté droit de la barricade!' Guérin's only response was to counsel perseverance in the face of the 'insolent triumph of the financial oligarchy'.

²⁴³ pp. 106.

Chapter five

The sociology of the parliamentary right, 1928-36

For René Rémond the opposition of *Fédération Républicaine* and *Alliance démocratique* derived from mentality and clientele. On the one hand the Federation 'rather faithfully expressed the state of mind, the convictions, and also the fears of a certain number of essentially rural areas, as yet hardly touched by economic evolution and remaining deeply attached to Old France'. On the other, the Alliance was 'the section of parliament which came closest to the leading circles of economy, of banking and finance. [... It] corresponded to a society quite different from the old rural society; it was the political expression of bourgeois France that emerged from the Revolution'.¹

Broadly speaking this characterization of the two major constituents of the parliamentary right is not unacceptable. As the Federation on the national level became more conservative so it absorbed the electorate of the old monarchist right in the rural west. We shall see that in the Rhône too the Federation's militant base shifted towards the western mountains and the Beaujolais. Just as on the national level the Alliance was a largely urban party,² so in the Rhône it was more or less confined to Lyon, where to some extent it took on the mantle of Aynardian Progressism.

But if the focus is narrowed then the picture begins to look more complicated. Writing in 1930, André Siegfried recognized that the Federation included not only Catholic landowners,³ but also certain 'proud bourgeois dynasties', along with quasi-feudal big businessmen. More complex still was the centre right, which Siegfried saw as attracted simultaneously towards the anti-clericalism of the left, and to the Catholicism of the ruling class and of 'organized capitalism'. What is more, this tension was to be found within each of the several parliamentary groups of the centre right.⁴

In this chapter we shall see that Siegfried's emphasis on the inter-penetration of religion and politics is closer to the mark than is Rémond's social determinism. True, Victor Perret declared his intention of uniting the possessing classes by fighting on the 'economic terrain'. But he also recognized that the bourgeoisie, especially the 'bourgeoisie en place', might prove to be incapable of bringing about 'national recovery', in which case it would be necessary to turn to 'popular elements'.⁵ In fact Perret had a particular conception of the economic terrain, whilst his popular support de-

1 Rémond, op. cit., pp. 268, 271.

2 Irvine, op. cit., p. 25; R. Sansom, 'L'Alliance démocratique', in R. Rémond and J. Bourdin, (eds.), *La France et les français en 1938-39*, Paris, 1978; D.G. Wileman, 'P-E Flandin and the Alliance Démocratique, 1929-1939', FH, 1990, pp. 139-73.

3 'Il n'y a pas en effet de commune, si petite soit-elle, ou l'église ne regroupe et n'organise une résistance; et partout où il existe un château; une dynastie bourgeoise, bref un forme consciente d'aristocratie sociale, cette résistance trouve un appui', André Siegfried, *Tableau des partis en France*, Paris, 1930, pp.172-173.

4 Siegfried, op. cit., 1930, pp. 179-80.

5 AN 317 AP 84.

pended on religious ties. For these reasons Perret's establishment of control over the Federation was associated with a shift towards what might loosely be termed the 'old Catholic bourgeois elites' of the peninsula. These were linked by the Church to the private sector white collar workers of the Croix Rousse. This was part of a reaction against the reformist conservatism of the late 1920s, which Perret attributed to the 'bourgeoisie en place'. The emergence of the PDP, meanwhile, reveals the alienation of Catholic intellectuals and white collar workers from the liberal tradition, a development accounted for neither by René Rémond nor Siegfried.

Methods

In this chapter the approach is quantitative. This does not mean that historical process has been reduced to what E.P. Thompson disparagingly refers to as a 'static geological section'.⁶ Such a view depends on a false dichotomy between structure and agency, for as Anthony Giddens shows human activity is the very medium through which social structures are constituted and reconstituted, as well as transformed. If this is accepted then the distinction between 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' research breaks down: 'all quantitative data, when scrutinized, turn out to be composites of "qualitative" [...] interpretations, produced by situated researchers, coders, government officials and others'.⁷ It follows that methods which E. P. Thompson describes as appropriate to analysis of qualitative evidence are also relevant to quantitative data.⁸

It is therefore appropriate to begin with a brief word on the methods used to reconstitute party memberships. The principal sources are accounts of political meetings in the press—some 5,070 names were collected in this way. In the agglomeration party organization usually corresponded to municipal arrondissements. Conveniently for our purposes electoral lists were maintained at this level, so it is possible to locate many of these sympathizers in them. In the suburbs party sections were organized at communal level, so it is a simple matter to find individuals in the corresponding electoral lists. In the countryside, where party organization was sketchy, commune of residence is nearly always stated in the press.

Electoral rolls give address, occupation, commune and date of birth. In Lyon and Villeurbanne the polling district in which the individual resided is also given, which permits detailed spatial analysis. Armed with address, it is possible to obtain additional information from censuses (family size, name of employer) and other

⁶ E.P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, London, 1978, p. 239.

⁷ A. Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, Cambridge, 1984, p. 333; A. Giddens, *Social Theory and Modern Sociology*, Cambridge, 1987.

⁸ Thompson, op. cit., p. 220-2. If statistical evidence consists in reality of large amounts of qualitative data, then it can and must be interrogated for the contradictions and liaisons, dominant and subordinate elements, rising and falling energies evoked by Thompson.

sources such as the high society *Tout-Lyon Annuaire* (second homes, *cercles*). In this way it was possible to obtain the professions of some 70% of the original sample.

This procedure is, of course, far from perfect. It is not possible to determine an individual's religious affiliation. For the *Croix de Feu* the method fails entirely to produce an adequate sample. Also, the method itself distorts the result. Specific problems will be indicated where they are relevant.⁹ For the moment it is sufficient to note that there are two main sources of bias which pull in different directions. On the one hand the process of identification skews the sample. Put simply, an elderly bourgeois or peasant is easier to locate than a young worker or student. Geographical or social mobility are the obvious reasons for this. On the other hand, identification depends on quality of information given in the press. For reasons which are explained in Appendix 3, levels of identification are higher in suburban areas, which are mainly working class. To an unknown extent this compensates for the overrepresentation of the bourgeoisie.

Membership

The initial sample for 1928 to June 1936, before names are eliminated because of non-location in the electoral lists, is made up of 93% Federation, 5% PDP, and a mere 3% lay centre right sympathizers. The proportion represented by the Federation is perhaps a little exaggerated, but judging by scattered indications in the party press and other sources, this is not too distant from the real situation.

William Irvine equates Federation membership in France as a whole with the circulation of *La Nation*, the party journal.¹⁰ Victor Perret revealed in 1927 that subscriptions in the Rhône were approaching 2,000.¹¹ But in the 1930s sales of the party organ stagnated while membership increased both nationally and in the Rhône.¹² Perhaps the best indication of rising membership in the Rhône is the ability of the Federation to support its own weekly journal from June 1932. Extrapolation from the few communes in which readership of *L'Union républicaine* is known suggests a circulation of 5,326.¹³ This is not an unreasonably large figure, given that 1935-6 represented the peak of Federation influence.¹⁴ It is given credence by the claim of the committee of the 6th arrondissement to have had several hundred members in 1932.¹⁵

⁹ For a detailed discussion of these sources see Appendix 4 and Pinol, *Mobilités et immobilismes*, passim.

¹⁰ Irvine, op. cit., p. 37.

¹¹ AN 317 AP 76, 2-5-1927, Perret to Marin.

¹² Jeanneney, *de Wendel*, pp. 428-9 reports that party membership rose from 3,000 in 1924 to 180,000 in 1938.

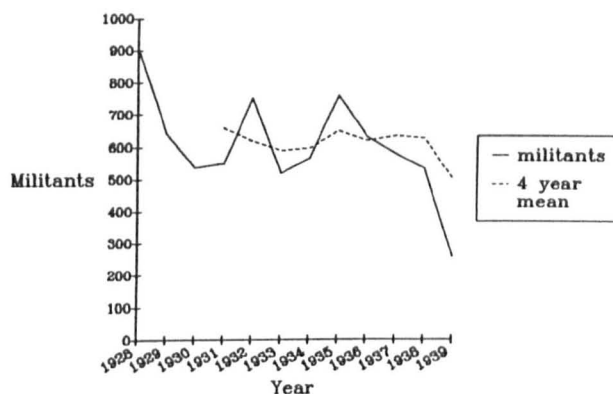
¹³ *Union républicaine*, 10-2-1935, 9-2-1936. Communes in which sales were particularly high were commended at party congresses in 1935 and 1936, showing for example that 700 copies were sold in the canton of Villeurbanne. The total was 1,105 copies in fourteen communes. These figures were projected onto the department as a whole by relating these figures to my own sample of sympathizers.

¹⁴ It is compatible with a known circulation of 4-5,000 in the region in 1940, a period when FR membership was considerably less than in 1936.

¹⁵ *L'Union républicaine*, 17-5-1932.

In 1930 and 1931 the party youth group claimed 2,000 members.¹⁶ Such figures are doubtless much exaggerated. But it is safe to conclude that membership of the Federation in the Rhône was untypically high for a party of the parliamentary right.

Graph 4: Federation militants by year



As for evolution of membership over time, the only indicator is our own sample. Graph 4 breaks down Federation sympathizers by year. As expected, peaks in activity coincide with general elections in 1928 and 1932. Conversely, the low points are in 1930 and 1933, the only two years in which there were neither national nor local elections. Surprisingly, in view of the probable rise in party membership in the 1930s, and of Victor Perret's conscious efforts to place party organization on a firmer footing, the highest number of sympathizers cited was in 1928. This is explained largely by the holding of large congresses to choose candidates in the four rural constituencies in that year.¹⁷ A four year running mean, which eliminates the influence of general elections, suggests a higher level of Federation activity after 1932, when Perret's rightist ideas were more popular, and as his recruitment drive bore fruit. But soon the Federation faced competition from the *Croix de Feu*, and was already in decline by 1936.

The electoral success of the lay centre right in the interwar years was dependent more upon individual deputies than upon a large militant base. The only available membership figure for the Alliance is eighty adherents in 1939.¹⁸ Since the source is an internal party one it is probably reliable. Membership had perhaps been greater in the early 1930s, but the Alliance had never been a mass party.

¹⁶ For example, 2,000 members in 50 sections according to the *Nouvelliste* of 8-2-1930, 2,000 in 80 sections according to the *Nouveau Journal* of 19-1-1931.

¹⁷ This was because the previous election had been held under a departmental list system which made such congresses unnecessary. In subsequent years they were less frequent because selection of sitting deputies was a formality.

¹⁸ Papers of the *Alliance Démocratique*, Carton 1.

The situation of the PDP was somewhat better. As a self-consciously democratic party the PDP was more open about its membership. In 1929 total income from subscriptions in all of the party's sections except the 3rd and 7th was published in the party press.¹⁹ From this it can be deduced that there were about 350 dues-paying members. In the following years the PDP experienced moderate growth. In 1933 the Cours section reported that it would soon break the 200 barrier. According to the party press 900 attended the *Fête fédérale* of 1935.²⁰ But it would be surprising if the number of PDP activists in the Rhône reached four figures.²¹ Its leaders were prepared to admit that 'notre fédération n'a certes pas l'allant de certaines de nos voisines'.²²

Geographical Implantation

Table 4 shows that between January 1928 and June 1936,²³ a slender majority of all parties taken together was resident in the agglomeration.²⁴ But just as conservative candidates did relatively better in the countryside in elections, so sympathizers were overrepresented relative to the registered electorate. The Federation was the most rural of the three parties; the PDP had minority support outside the agglomeration; the lay centre right almost none.

Table 4: The Parliamentary Right in the Rhône, 1928 to June 1936 (percent)			
Party	Agglom.	Dept.	Total
Federation	45	55	2968
PDP	78	22	163
Centre right	97	3	77
Total	49	51	3208
Electorate	65	35	236018

19 *Bulletin des Démocrates Populaires du Rhône*, 12-6-1929. Total amount was F1,113. The press also gives the number of adherents in the 6th arrondissement (80) together with subscriptions. So it can be calculated that average dues were in the order of 4.3 francs, giving total membership of 259, to which can be added an estimated further 90 adherents of the 3rd and 7th sections, making a total of 349. This guess is based on the knowledge that the 3rd arrondissement was, along with the 5th and 6th, the main area of PDP recruitment.

20 *Trait d'Union des Démocrates Populaires du Rhône*, 1-3-35, July 1935. In the same year the journal claimed 100 subscribers and 500 readers.

21 Another indication of the influence of the PDP is the number of subscriptions—570 in 1935—to the Dominican journal *Sept*. Aline Coutrot, *Un journal de Combat: Sept*, Paris, 1971, p.197. Subscriptions to *L'Aube* numbered 510 in 1935, 507 in 1938. François Mayeur, *L'Aube. Étude d'un journal d'opinion, 1932-1940*, Paris, 1966, p. 187.

22 *Nouveau Journal*, 8-1-1936.

23 June 1936 is used as a reference date because of the reorganization of the right after the victory of the Popular Front.

24 For the following analyses, unless otherwise stated, fifteen communes have been treated as part of the agglomeration. To the eleven studied by Jean-Luc Pinol (Caluire et Cuire, Ste Foy, Pierre Benite, Oullins, La Mulatière, Lyon, Villeurbanne, Vaulx en Velin, Vénissieux, St Fons, and Bron), have been added three residential communes (Tassin la Demi Lune, Francheville, and Ecully), and one industrial commune (St Rambert l'Île Barbe).

During the period in question the contribution of the agglomeration to the Federation sample grew from 43% in 1928 to 1931 to 49% in 1932 to June 1936. This is largely accounted for by the weight of delegates to the 1928 congresses referred to above.²⁵ But sympathizers in the city remained underrepresented in relation to the electorate as a whole.

It is, however, probable that the means by which the sample was collected exaggerates rural backing for the Federation. The reason is that the nature of political activity differs between the agglomeration and the rest of the department. In Lyon and the suburbs the great majority of names are drawn from accounts of party meetings and so allegiances are usually clear. But outside the city, thanks to the looseness of party organization, we have a hotchpotch of individuals drawn from two kinds of sources. On the one hand, members of Federation committees and attenders at party meetings. On the other, a larger group of delegates at meetings called to choose candidates, together with those who welcomed conservative candidates on pre-election tours to their commune—in both cases usually mayors or their deputies. At such times factional allegiance was normally subordinated to support for the unique candidate of the right. So it is possible that the sample includes many who were not Federation supporters.

For these reasons it is necessary to divide the sample into two parts for many analyses. Outside the agglomeration all supporters of the parliamentary right (except the PDP, which was separately organized) are grouped together. In practice this is not a great disadvantage, for only two sympathizers of the *Alliance démocratique* could positively be identified in the countryside. Even though Laurent Bonnevey, deputy for Tarare, had left the Federation for the *Républicains de gauche*²⁶ in 1929, his supporters were mainly Federation sympathizers. It therefore seems reasonable to regard the resulting group as corresponding to the broadest definition of the Federation: Perret's organized wing, together with the notables and their clients who were loosely associated with it.

The Department

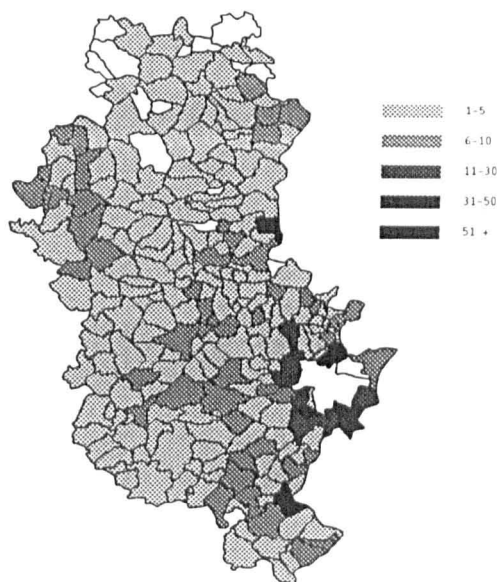
The geographical distribution of Federation sympathizers in absolute figures, shown in Map 5.1, is not especially revealing. Three remarks can be made. First, the presence of Federation sympathizers correlates positively with the distribution of the registered electorate.²⁷ Second, sympathizers of the Federation were less numerous where the right was electorally strong, that is in rural communes. The third feature of

²⁵ This is confirmed by the fact that there was no corresponding change in the composition of the *Comité départemental* of the Federation.

²⁶ A parliamentary group affiliated to the *Alliance démocratique*.

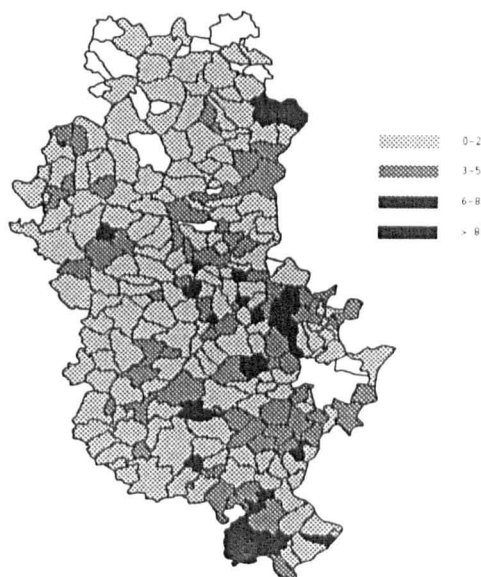
²⁷ The correlation coefficient between number of militants and the registered electorate is fairly high, at .7191. The only two communes with more than 50 militants are Villefranche and Givors, the two largest communes outside the agglomeration.

Militants of the Federation Republicaine
1928 to June 1936



Map 5.1

Federation Republicaine 1928 to June 1936
Militants per hundred electors



Map 5.2

The Federation Republicaine
1930



Scale
 · 1
 ● 5
 ● 10

Map 5.3

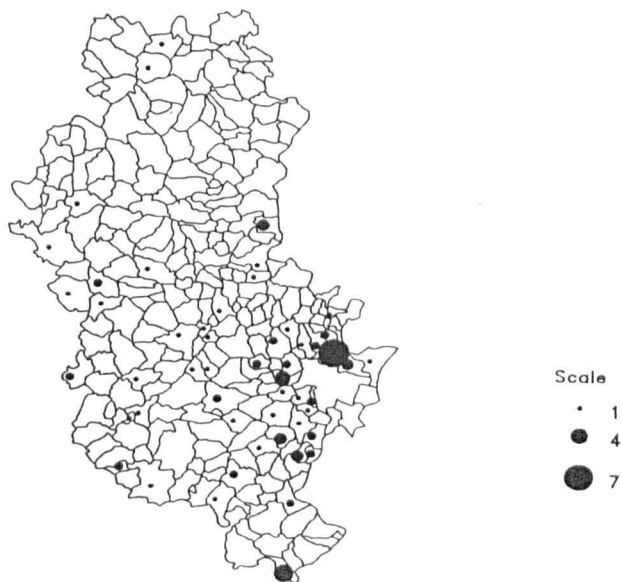
The Federation Republicaine
1933



Scale
 · 1
 ● 5
 ● 10

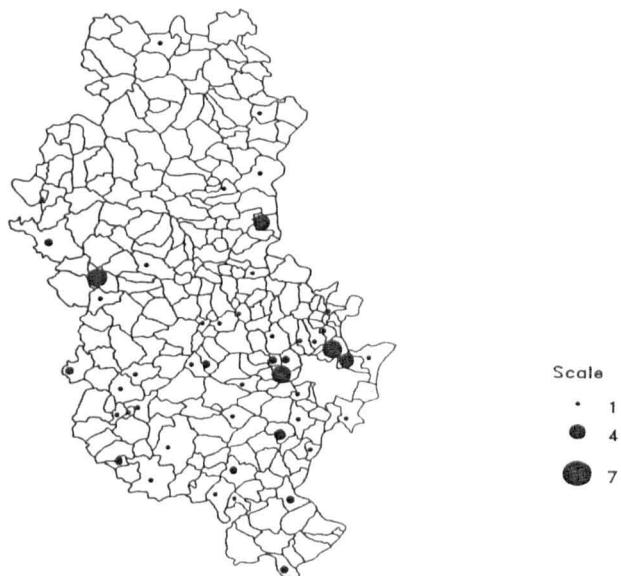
Map 5.4

The Federation Republicaine
Comite departementale in 1930



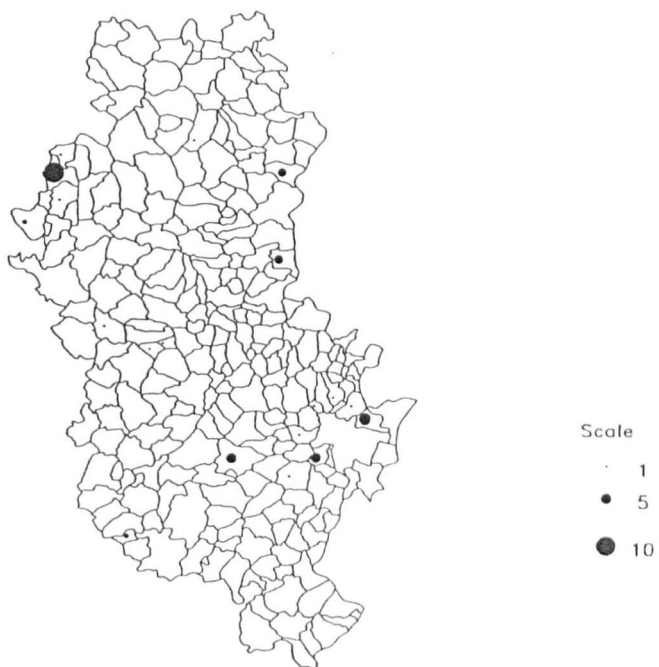
Map 5.5

The Federation Republicaine
Comite departementale in 1934



Map 5.6

The Parti democrate populaire
1928 to 1939



Map 5.7

the map is the evenness of implantation over much of the department. This reflects the nature of the sources and in turn the style of rural politics. The usual practice in an account of a rural political meeting or campaign tour was to cite one or two individuals as representatives of each commune—often the mayor—whatever the commune's population. Smaller communes are therefore overrepresented. For this reason the effect of calculating the number of conservative sympathizers per 100 electors is simply to make communes with tiny populations, such as Moiré with 131 inhabitants in 1936, stand out (see Map 5.2). That the conservative press felt obliged to pay so much attention to small-town mayors tells us much about the Federation.

Table 5: Sympathizers of the Parliamentary Right by Region, 1931 and 1933 (Percent)		
Region	1930	1933
Plateau Lyonnais	64	41
Beaujolais viticole	26	42
Monts du Lyonnais	7	15
Monts du Beaujolais	2	2
Total	301	266

The dual nature of the Federation—the co-existence of notables and party militants—can be seen in the implantation of sympathizers in 1930 and 1933, the only two years in which there were neither local nor national elections (Maps 5.3 and 5.4 and Table 5). In such periods many notables had little to do with the Federation. Therefore it is possible to isolate the 'organized' Federation and to measure the impact of Victor Perret's efforts to give the party a permanent structure. In 1930 Perret was disputing control with François Peissel. But by 1933 he was triumphant.

Clearly political activity in non-electoral periods was an affair of the more densely populated east of the department. But this is truer in 1930 than in 1933. In Table 5 it is possible to see a shift in activity away from the plateau, where the percentage of activists falls by about a third. This fall is only partially accounted for by a big drop in the number of sympathizers in industrial Givors.²⁸ Within the boundaries of the plateau the Federation retreats towards the residential suburbs of the western agglomeration.

Meanwhile the proportion of sympathizers in regions of more recent commitment to the Republic grew. There is a doubling of the proportion of Federation sympathizers in the Monts du Lyonnais. In 1931 they had been found in small industrial and market towns like St Symphorian sur Coise and St Foy l'Argentière, and in a few agricultural communes; three years later the Federation was present in the majority of

²⁸ If Givors is not included, the proportion of sympathizers on the plateau falls from 60% in 1930 to 39% in 1933.

rural communities. Sympathizers are particularly numerous in the southern extremity of the ranges, where a short-lived intercommunal committee accounts for the high number of militants, and in the canton of St Laurent de Chamousset where Alexandre la Batie organized a number of meetings.²⁹

The Beaujolais also increases in importance. Within this area there is a shift towards the town of Villefranche and the rural communes of the canton of Anse, in contrast with the more even spread of 1930. This reflects on a smaller scale the shift from a type of politics in which each commune was represented by a notable, towards a party system.

The Monts du Beaujolais are an exception to this pattern, for in neither 1930 nor 1933 was there a significant number of militants in this area. But in late 1935 the Federation began to organize in Bonnevey's fief, confirming thus the move of the Federation away from the plateau.

The same trends can be seen in the geographical implantation of the membership of the Federation's *Comité départemental* (see Table 6 and Maps 5.5 and 5.6). Ruralization of the sympathizers of the Federation is reflected in the rising proportion who lived in less populous communes.³⁰ In the *Comité départemental*, however, the proportion in less populous communes hardly increased at all.³¹ This probably reflects the fact that leadership of the Federation remained in the hands of a wealthier and more urban elite.

Table 6: Members of the Comité départemental of the <i>Fédération républicaine</i> (Percent)		
Region	1930	1933
Plateau Lyonnais	62	43
Monts du Lyonnais	15	22
Monts du Beaujolais	14	19
Beaujolais viticole	9	16
Total	65	58

Thus the Federation under Victor Perret was shifting away from the historic centres of moderate Republicanism on the plateau towards largely rural formerly monarchist regions. These were areas where the 'traditional' social authorities remained in control. But this happened at a time when the foundations of notable politics were becoming rather shaky. Indeed, Perret's establishment of control over the party can be seen (in

29 If comparison is made between all sympathizers present in 1928-31 and 1932-36, then the Mountains decline—either because Peissel's tours in Mountains were less reported by a hostile press, or because sympathy for Perret in mountains led to indifference to his rival.

30 The percentage of sympathizers in communes of more than 1,500 inhabitants fell from 47% in 1930 to 34%.

31 It rose from 52% to 53%.

part) as a reaction to this crisis. Rather than 'democratizing' the Federation, the effect of Perret's activities was to prop up old modes of political organization.

Related to the dissolution of notable politics was the rise of the PDP. From Map 5.7 it can be seen that the Beaujolais mountains were the main source of support for Christian democracy outside Lyon. Militants were most numerous in the canton of Thizy, especially in Cours.³² Presence in cotton towns was matched by a certain strength in other small and medium towns: Belleville, Villefranche, St Symphorian sur Coise and Vaugneray. But the PDP was almost entirely absent from agricultural communes; before the rise of the *Croix de Feu* notables were not subject to political challenge in rural areas. The importance of individual action in small parties is illustrated by the Vaugneray committee, which was animated by the family of an intellectual from the milieu of the *Chronique*, Joseph Vialatoux.

The Agglomeration

Map 5.8 shows the distribution of militants and sympathizers of the Federation by polling district in Lyon and Villeurbanne. Implantation in suburban communes can be seen on Map 5.1. Just as the influence of the party reached into almost all the communes of the department, so no part of the agglomeration was untouched. All the same, certain areas stand out. In older parts of the city they include most of the 5th, all but the central districts of the Croix Rousse, and parts of the 2nd (205 and 210). On the left bank the main area of strength is in the southern and eastern part of Villeurbanne and adjacent districts of the 3rd and 6th arrondissements. Otherwise, only a few districts have more than average numbers of sympathizers, mainly located on the quais of the Rhône (702, 305, 606 and 611). With the exception of the Croix Rousse these were either bourgeois or working class areas.

What is most striking about the distribution of Federation sympathizers in absolute terms is the degree of support in peripheral areas of the city, whether in proletarian districts like Vénissieux or residential communes like Caluire. Map 5.9 shows the number of militants per 1,000 electors in Lyon and Villeurbanne. All thirteen of the fifteen districts in which there were six or more sympathizers per thousand are in peripheral and often working class areas. In the 3rd and 7th arrondissements the districts which lie beyond the Lyon-Geneva railway line stand out, as do the Croix Rousse, Vaise, and Perrache. In much of the centre of the city, except in certain bourgeois districts, the Federation is relatively weak. Map 5.2 shows that militants are also very substantially overrepresented in suburban communes.

But because of the manner in which the sample was constituted, the significance of the Federation presence in suburban areas must not be exaggerated.³³ In

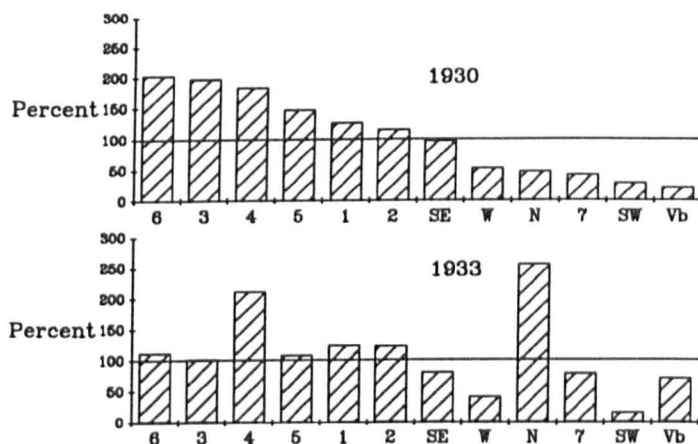
³² PDP presence in the towns of the Monts du Beaujolais is part of a wider area of Christian democratic influence in the textile towns of the Roannais.

³³ See page 101.

Lyon and Villeurbanne knowledge of polling district is dependent upon identification in the electoral list, so not all sympathizers cited in the press can be mapped. But in suburban communes all names found in the sources are included. Also the sample incorporates many persons whose only contribution to the life of the Federation was to appear on one of its lists for municipal elections. This weights the sample because the number of councillors per head of population was much lower in Lyon than in the suburbs.³⁴ These difficulties can be eliminated by using the arrondissements of Lyon and the commune of Villeurbanne as units of analysis rather than polling districts, by relating number of militants to the size of the electorate, and by using only those militants cited in years in which there were no elections.³⁵ The influence of municipal elections can be disposed of by excluding campaign periods from analysis. As in rural communes it is possible to isolate the impact of Victor Perret by comparing 1930 with 1933.

The one disadvantage of this procedure is that the importance of the Federation in proletarian suburban communes remains exaggerated. The reason is the presence of large numbers of foreigners, none of whom were on the electoral register. It is not possible to resolve this problem by relating sympathizers to population rather than electorate because of census fraud in Lyon.

Graph 5: Federation Militants in 1930 and 1933³⁶



³⁴ In Lyon there were at least 1,800 electors for every councillor. The record is held by the 2nd arrondissement, where there were 2,640 electors per councillor in 1935, thanks to a blatant piece of gerrymandering on the part of the Radical municipality. There were 468 electors per councillor in Villeurbanne and 48 in Pierre-Benite.

³⁵ Eliminating only municipal election years (1929 and 1935) also produces a more intelligible result. Suburban communes remain the most overrepresented.

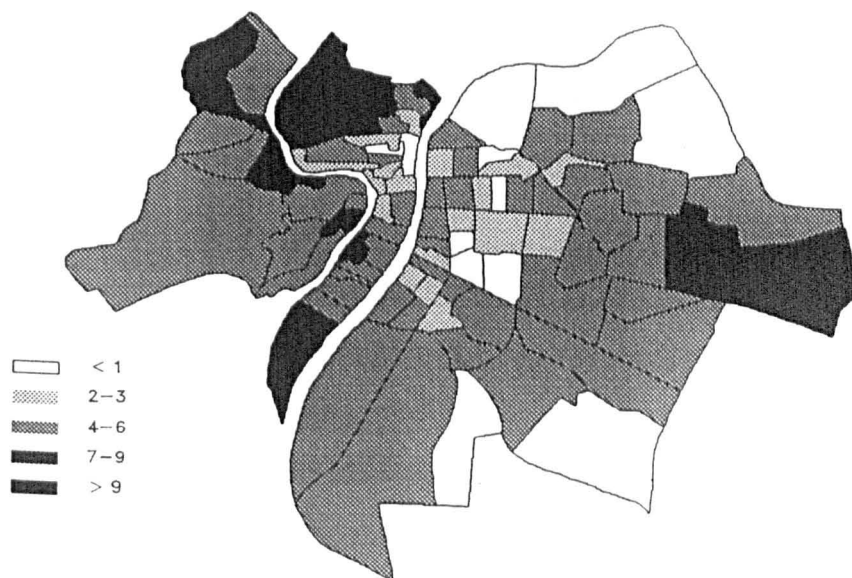
³⁶ The pattern of support identified here is confirmed by a remark in *Union républicaine* that the 7th arrondissement section, was not, unlike sections in the fourth and 1st arrondissements, able to mount large functions appealing to all classes.

The Federation republicaine
1928 to June 1936



Map 5.8

Militants per thousand electors
1928 to June 1936



Map 5.9

The Federation republicaine
1930



Map 5.10

The Federation republicaine
1933



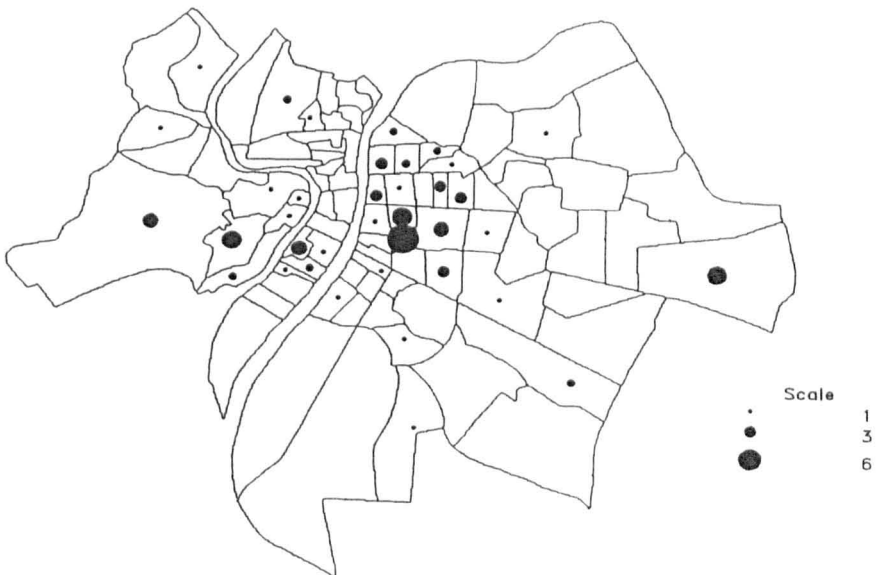
Map 5.11

The Centre Right
1928 to 1939



Map 5.12

The Parti démocrate populaire
1928 to 1939



Map 5.13

The Federation republicaine
Comite departementale c. 1930



Map 5.14

The Federation republicaine
Comite departementale c. 1934



Map 5.15

This is the basis on which Graph (?) was constructed. Under- and over-representation are shown in terms of an index.³⁷ A figure of 100 means that the proportion of sympathizers in a given area is equal to the proportion of the total electorate in that area. A figure of fifty means that half as many militants as expected were found, while 200 means that there are twice as many militants as expected.

It is immediately apparent that the importance of suburban communes has been reduced.³⁸ The only exceptions are the northern suburbs. This is due to the presence of an unusually large committee in the commune of Caluire. It was established in order to back the lengthy campaign of François Peissel for the mayoralty of that commune. Once this aim had been achieved in May 1935 the committee declined.

Otherwise, the most notable feature of the graph is the relative decline of Federation implantation on the left bank of the Rhône, that is in the area where Aynard had once found his chief supporters. This decline is evident in both the 3rd and 6th arrondissements. The 6th was in 1930 the most overrepresented area of the city. The 1930 Federation sample in the 6th is inflated by overlap with the lay centre right in an area where all strands in the right were federated in a non-partisan committee. In the course of 1930 the Federation organized its own pro-Perret section in the 6th. By 1933 the Federation audience was much reduced. In the 3rd arrondissement the fall in the number of militants is probably to be explained by differentiation from the PDP. There is also a sharp decline in the importance of the 5th arrondissement. Growing antagonism between Federation and PDP is partly to blame here too. The 5th was also the only area apart from the 6th where the Alliance had any support. In 1933 the main areas of overrepresentation of Federation militants were all in the peninsula and the Croix Rousse: the space of the 'old bourgeoisie' and those to whom they were linked. The importance of the 1st and 2nd would be greater still had the members of the Federation's satellite organizations in those arrondissements been included in the sample.³⁹

It is also interesting to note that turnover of sympathizers is considerably higher in working class and peripheral parts of the agglomeration. This is illustrated by Graph 6, which plots the average number of years in which an individual was cited in the press. All proletarian suburbs are grouped on the right of the graph, as are those parts of Lyon with significant working class populations (except the 5th). High turnover is partly due to the greater mobility of the population at large in the suburbs, but is not the only explanation because Federation sympathizers were recruited

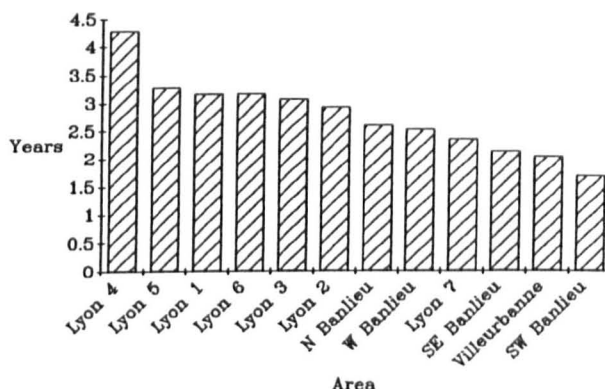
37 This is calculated by dividing the percentage of adherents in a given area into the percentage of electors in that area and multiplying by 100.

38 The south east *banlieu* comprises largely working class Bron, Vénissieux and St Fons, together with Vaulx en Velin, a mixed agricultural and industrial commune. The South west *banlieu* also comprises mainly industrial Pierre Benite, La Mulatière and Oullins. Four residential communes make up the western *banlieu*: Francheville, Ecully and Tassin and Ste. Foy. Finally, the northern suburbs include Caluire et Cuire and St Rambert.

39 The *Cercle des travailleurs* in the 1st; the *Foyer de Perrache* in the 2nd.

mainly from the locally born. All the arrondissements of Lyon show greater stability, with the bourgeois western suburbs occupying an intermediate position. The most assiduous militants were in the Croix Rousse. There will often be occasion to note the deep roots of the Federation in that area.

Graph 6: Mean Years of Activity in the Federation, the Agglomeration



Thus the most active Federation militants were to be found in the heart of the commune of Lyon. Within the latter the Federation was moving towards 'old' Lyon. This is true of both the bourgeois 2nd and the unsegregated 4th.⁴⁰ Apart from involvement in older economic activities these districts have in common a high religious practice. Examples are 404 and 408 in the Croix Rousse. In such areas the presence of private sector white collar workers, a relatively dense parish network, and a leavening of 'old bourgeois' explain the success of the Federation.⁴¹ In areas on the left bank with a similar social mix but a lower level of Church attendance and absence of 'old bourgeois', the Federation does less well. It fared especially badly in the parish of St Sacrement.⁴² In the early 1950s this parish had the lowest level of religious practice in the city.⁴³

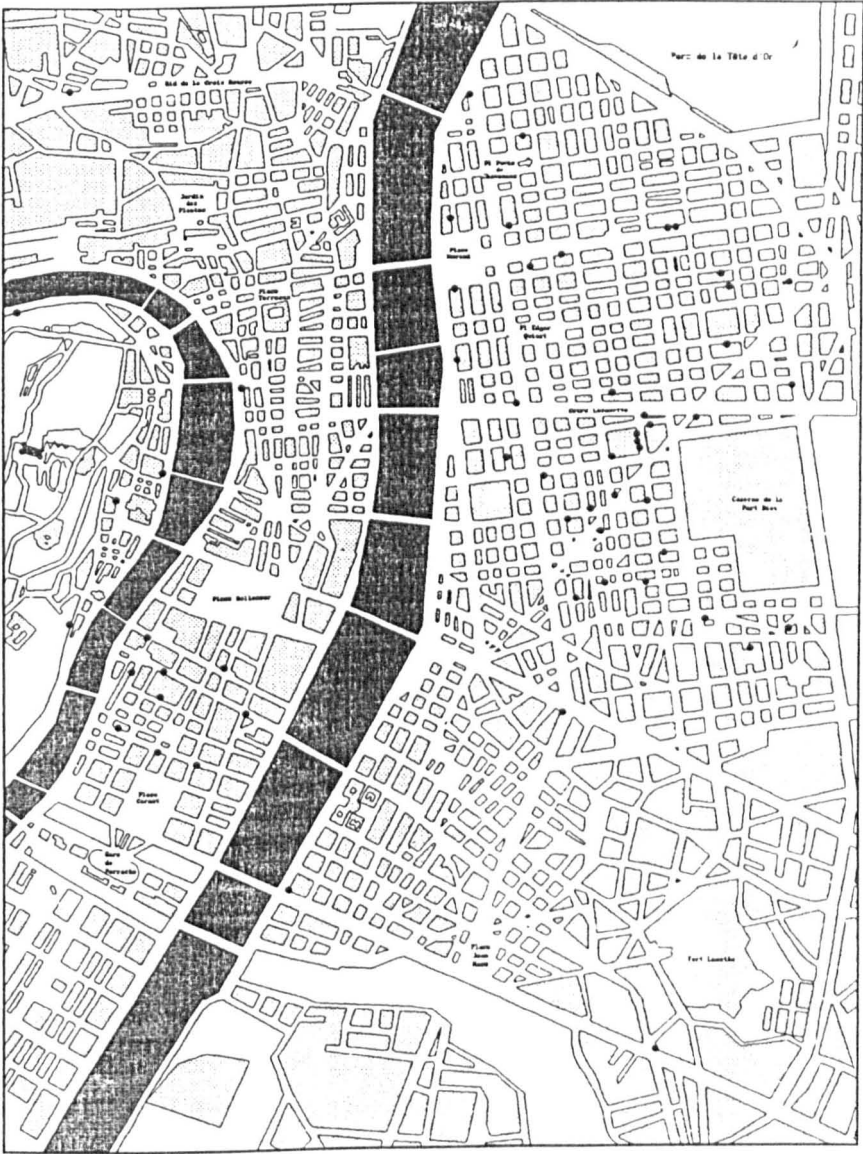
To sum up, it is possible to see the Federation in the agglomeration as comprising three overlapping components. First, Perret's party, which was increasingly Catholic and traditionalist and resident mainly in the peninsula and Croix Rousse. Second a wider group of Perret sympathizers who could be mobilized at election time, and who often resided in working class areas. Third, the remnants of the old Federa

⁴⁰ To some extent the 1st arrondissement is an exception. On the one hand the Federation possessed a dedicated and growing core of militants (see Graph (?)). But the number of sympathizers mobilized when election years are considered was much lower than in the 2nd or 4th. The most likely explanation is Edouard Herriot, popular among the electorate at large, but detested by a dedicated minority. Many of the elites, meanwhile were pushed towards *Action française*.

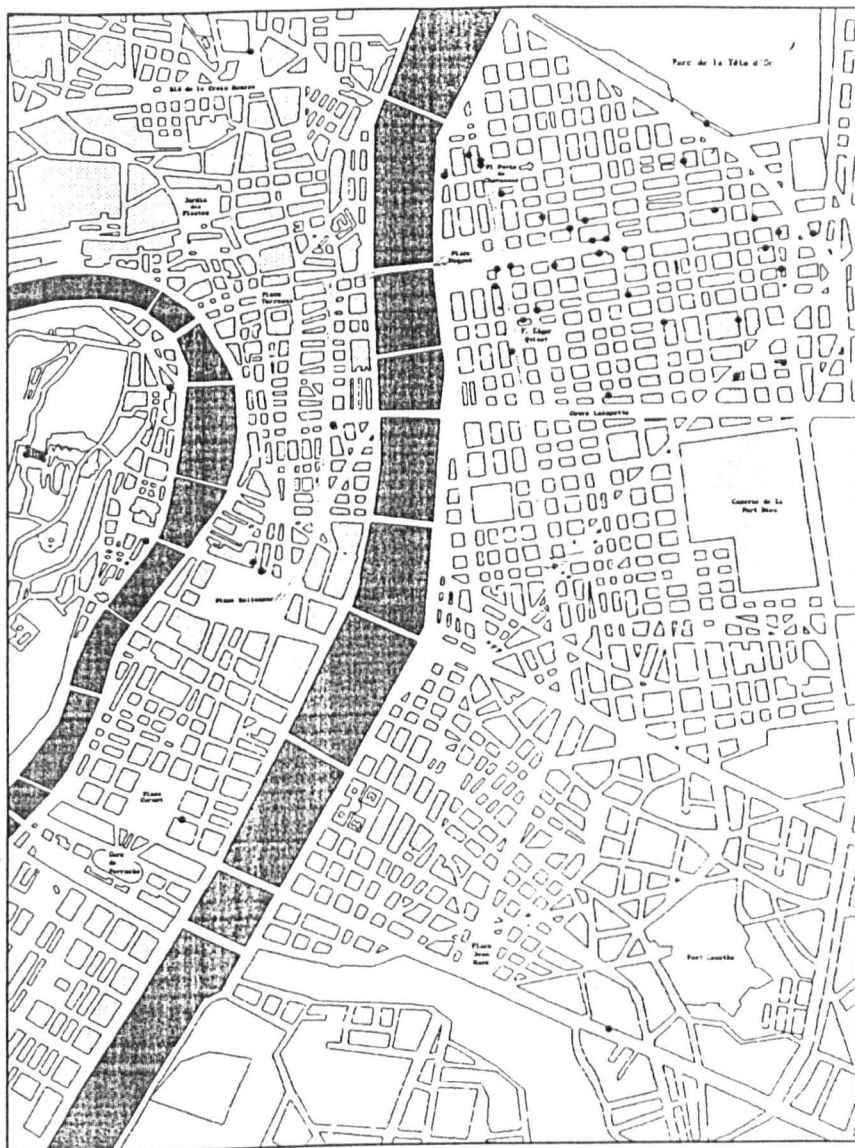
⁴¹ See Chapter six.

⁴² Roughly polling districts 301, 302, 306, 307 and 308.

⁴³ Labbens, *op. cit.*, *passim*.



Map 5.17
The PDP in central Lyon



Map 5.16
The *Alliance démocratique* in central Lyon

tion. They had little to do with Victor Perret, but supported the Federation's candidates at election time. The Federation of the 1930s was no longer the party of the dynamic industrial bourgeoisie of the Brotteaux as it had been in the days of Edouard Aynard. These changes parallel those observed in the rest of the department.

They also help to explain the residence of the bulk of adherents of the lay centre right in the 6th arrondissement, mainly in districts 607 and 608. (See Map 5.12). There is a scattering of sympathizers in the 2nd and 5th arrondissements, but Map 5.16 re-emphasizes the extent to which they were located in a small and wealthy area from the Place Edouard Quinet in the south to Place Puvis de Chavannes in the north and westwards along the cours Morand. This suggests a network of personal ties based on *quartier*.⁴⁴ The contrast with the Federation emerges best from comparison of the elitist centre right with the cadres of the Federation (see Maps 5.14 and 5.15). Here the opposition between the left bank of the Rhône on the one hand and the *presqu'île* is clear. The 2nd arrondissement has ten representatives on the *Conseil* in both periods, the 6th has four in the first period, six in the second.

The geography of the PDP is also distinctive (see Map 5.13). It is easily explicable in terms of Catholicism. The most important concentration is to be found in the de-Christianized and largely working class parish of St Sacrement. This could be due to the presence of an abbé démocrate, of which there were a number on the left bank. But if we descend to a lower level of analysis, as on Map 5.17, it can be seen that several adherents lived in or near a Catholic housing development, the Cité Rambaud. In the 2nd arrondissement PDP members lived in the area around the rue Sala, close to institutions like the *Chronique* and the Catholic University. Hence also the presence of militants in St Just and Point du Jour (districts 510 and 505), adjacent to the Basilica of Fourvière. Finally, a few Christian democrats live in those parts of the Brotteaux where the lay centre right was strong, but where religious practice was also quite high. The PDP is almost entirely absent from working class areas of the agglomeration. PDP implantation parallels that of the CFTC.

Generations of Conservatism

Antonio Gramsci described French conservative parties in the early 1930s as 'historico-political documents of the various phases of past French history, whose outdated terminology they continue to repeat'.⁴⁵ It is easy to find evidence for this in the age profile of the parliamentary right.

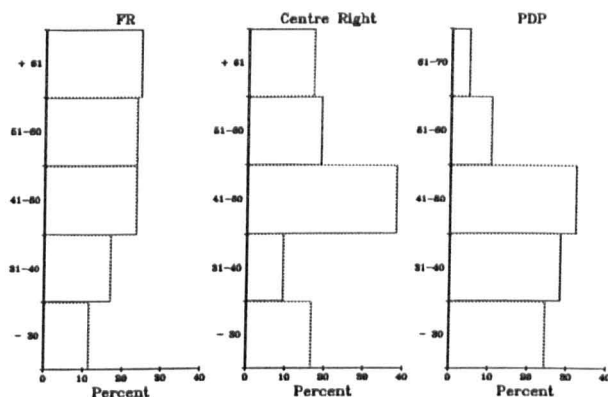
Not surprisingly for a new party, PDP sympathizers, with an average age of forty, are considerably younger than those of the Federation—of which the sup-

⁴⁴ It is interesting to note, however, that supporters of the Centre right are rare in the wealthiest parts of the Brotteaux: the quais of the Rhône and the Boulevard des Belges (i.e. the northern boundary of district 611).

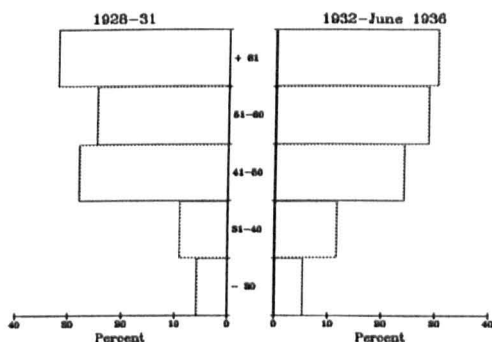
⁴⁵ Gramsci, *op. cit.*, p. 211. René Rémond uses a similar metaphor, likening the right to 'a building on which each age has placed its mark, and which at first discourages the archeologist who wishes to date it' (Rémond, *op. cit.*, p. 22).

porters are on average forty-nine. Equally marked is the contrast between the age pyramids of the two parties, shown in Graph 7.⁴⁶ The proportion of Federation sympathizers in each age group falls fairly evenly from 25% in the over sixty category, to 12% in the case of the under thirties. Nor is it surprising that Federation leaders were older still (see Graph 8). In sharp contrast, only 5% of PDP sympathizers were over sixty, while the proportion in their twenties is more than twice as great as in the Federation.

Graph 7: Age of Sympathizers



Graph 8: Members of the *Comité départemental* of the Federation in the Rhône by Age

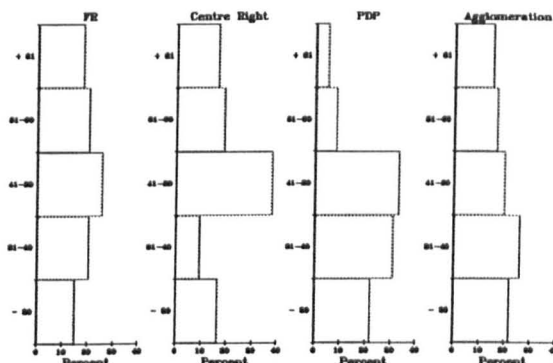


The age profile of the centre right is more complex. Average age, at forty-seven, is only a little lower than in the FR. And as in the Federation those under forty are underrepresented. But it is individuals in their forties (38%), and to a lesser extent their fifties (19%), who stand out, not the over sixties. Once again it is instructive to compare the centre right (Graph 7) with the ruling body of the Federation (Graph 8).

⁴⁶ Age is calculated for the median year, 1932. Year of birth is known for 1,993 Federation, 106 PDP, and only 42 sympathizers of the centre right.

The notables of the centre right were a generation younger than those of the Federation.

Graph 9: The Parliamentary Right in the Agglomeration: Age of Sympathizers



Graph 9 compares the ages of sympathizers in the agglomeration with J.-L. Pinol's sample of the Lyonnais electorate.⁴⁷ Since all but two centre right supporters lived in Lyon, its age pyramid is almost identical to that for the department as a whole. To a lesser extent this is also true of the Christian democrats, of whom three quarters live in the agglomeration.⁴⁸ The picture regarding the Federation is however significantly different from that in the department as a whole. Sympathizers in the agglomeration, are on average five years younger than those in the rest of the department. Graph 9 shows a fall in the representation of the over sixties from 25% in the department as a whole to 18% in the agglomeration. Conversely the age pyramid of the Federation in the rest of the department is an exaggerated version of that in Graph 7. It has a narrow base and broad peak, with the over sixties representing one third of the total.⁴⁹ The dissimilarities between the generational structures of the Federation in town and countryside are a function of the Federation's dependence upon notables in much of the countryside.

Victor Perret, through the creation of a youth group, made a conscious effort to broaden the appeal of the party. Yet ageing over time is apparent however the sample is broken down.⁵⁰ It is therefore tempting to link Victor Perret's triumph in the Federation with a shift in the geographical bases of party support towards the space of

⁴⁷ Strictly speaking such a comparison is dubious, for my figures include militants from four suburban communes not included in the Pinol study. In practice the distortion is likely to be very small.

⁴⁸ Neither does the mean age of PDP sympathizers—40 in the agglomeration, 39 in the rest of the department—vary much.

⁴⁹ 33% to be precise.

⁵⁰ Average age of party sympathizers in the department as a whole rose slightly from forty-nine in the years 1928 to 1932, to fifty-one in the period 1932 to June 1936. In the agglomeration average age rose from 47 in the first period to 49 in the second. In the department corresponding figures are 51 and 54. In the agglomeration the proportion of under thirties fell from 19% in 1930 to 8% in 1933.

the old elites and to the older generation. This is partly correct, but must be qualified by taking into account the relations of the Federation with the far right. At first Perret's organizational drive had depended partly on the new youth group, which flourished especially in 1930. This, as we shall see, drew support from the young militants of the extreme right. Incapable of autonomous action at this time, the far right tended to back Perret for his uncompromising nationalism. Ageing of the Federation in 1933 is partly explained by the near-disappearance of the far right and consequently of the *Groupe des jeunes*. Then in 1934 when the far right recovered it was under the leadership of the fiercely independent *Croix de Feu*. The rise of La Rocque's league helps to explain the marked fall in the number of persons in their forties shown in Graph 9: this was the age group in which old soldiers were most common. None of this, however, contradicts the ageing of the Federation.

What conclusions can be drawn from the contrasting age structures of the three parties of the parliamentary right? It is difficult to make direct connections between age and any particular set of political attitudes. But the recruitment of the Federation among those who had reached maturity during the Dreyfus affair and the struggles between Church and state of the early twentieth century—those in their fifties or older in 1932—is surely significant, and does much to explain the politics of the Federation, especially under Victor Perret.⁵¹ The lay centre right was fairly well represented in the same age groups. In the interwar years the centre right can be seen as taking on the liberal-conservative mantle of Edouard Aynard. Hence the presence of one-time collaborators of Aynard such as Etienne Fougère, Laurent Bonnevay, and even Auguste Isaac. It is not surprising that polemics between Federation and Alliance sometimes took on an archaic tone.

The Federation also appealed, though with decreasing success, to the war generation. Those most likely to have passed the war in the front line—perhaps 90% of some age groups—were in 1932 aged about thirty-four to fifty-three, an age group which corresponds best to our forty-one to fifty category. Victor Perret, forty-nine in 1932, spent the war in the artillery. The ideas he promoted in the interwar years were perhaps the logical result of the impact of trench warfare on a man with a background in the Catholic integristism and the ALP.⁵² It should, however, be noted that both the PDP and the centre right are more overrepresented in the forty-one to fifty age group. This warns against naive notions of generational conflict resulting from the war. As Antoine Prost argues, experience of combat was simply too common to form

⁵¹ Jean-Luc Pinol, in a forthcoming publication, shows the longevity in politics of this generation.

⁵² Prost, *Les Anciens combattants*, vol. II, pp. 1-18.

⁵³ Some of Perret's closest collaborators, such as Alexandre Bosse-Platière (fifty in 1932), and Pierre Burgeot (forty-six), had also served in the trenches.

the basis of a coherent political movement, or even a common set of attitudes.⁵⁴ It may have shaped a generation, but it did so in a multitude of ways.

This reminds us that the war also led to a conscious effort to overcome the religious quarrels of the 1900s. Many Alliance militants would have been unable to remember the passions unleashed by the Separation. This helps to explain discretion on the religious issue by a party in which there were many practicing, but anti-integrist, Catholics. Most members of the PDP had reached adulthood during the 1920s. Their experience was of the swan-song of state anti-clericalism under the Cartel, but also of the re-establishment of relations with the Vatican and the condemnation of *Action Française*. Many of those in their thirties and forties would have passed through the *Groupes d'études* of the *Chronique* in the pre-war years. PDP militants were a product of a climate in which re-Christianization seemed feasible because of the decline of overt anti-clericalism. This helps again to explain their ambivalent attitude towards secularism.

Thus the age structure of the parliamentary right confirms the notion of a right marked by the formative experiences of individual militants and sympathizers. Of course, the idea that there was, for example, a 'generation of 1900' with a common world view is not difficult to criticize. Nevertheless, if generation is brought into relation with factors such as milieu, family background and profession, then it is an essential concept.

Origins

The same considerations are relevant to other variables. Jean-Luc Pinol shows that 'socio-geographic' origin of the electorate in the agglomeration——i.e. the rural or urban nature of the commune of birth and its location——cannot be analysed separately from age and occupational structure. Young electors are much more likely to have been born in the agglomeration.⁵⁵ The nature of the immigrant population also changes with age, for younger electors were more often born in 'urban' communes, while older electors originate more frequently in rural France. Also socio-geographic origin is related to occupation, in that natives of the agglomeration are quite strongly overrepresented among the elites, artisans, technicians, and white collar workers, especially those working in the silk industry. Rural recruitment was the rule in public service. Workers recruit more or less equally from both sources.⁵⁶ These problems become more complex when the rest of the department is taken into account. The peasantry is largely immobile. The significance of an individual having been born outside of his commune of residence differs between town and country. For these rea-

⁵⁴ Prost, *Les Ancien combattants*, passim.

⁵⁵ Natives of the agglomeration represent 63% of those aged twenty-five or less, but only 28% of the over sixty-fives.

⁵⁶ Pinol, *Espace sociale*, pp. 24-46.

sons town and country will again be discussed separately and in both cases only in outline.

For what its worth Table 7 shows the geographical origins of sympathizers of the parliamentary right in the whole department. Sample sizes for the Christian democrats, and in particular the centre right, are not large. But if we confine ourselves to the tendency, then certain features stand out.

Table 7: Geographical Origins of Sympathizers of the Parliamentary Right in the Rhône (percent)				
Party	Rhône	Rhône-Alps	France	Total
FR	67	23	10	1813
PDP	61	22	17	82
Centre Rt.	50	40	11	38

Not surprisingly conservative sympathizers are drawn largely from the locally born and therefore more deeply rooted part of the population. This is truest of the Federation, of which more than two thirds of sympathizers were born in the department. Given that the Federation alone had significant peasant support and the greater age of its sympathizers this is hardly surprising. It is more interesting therefore that 58% of *Comité départemental* members had been born in the department, in spite of its heavy weighting towards the older generation and lack of peasant farmers.

The Agglomeration

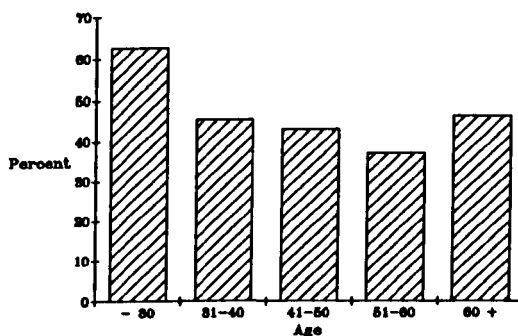
In Table 8 those sympathizers for whom commune of birth is known are broken down according to whether they were born in the agglomeration, the Rhône-Alps region⁵⁷ or elsewhere in France.⁵⁸ All three parties are more Lyonnais than the electorate as a whole, confirming that integration into the city is a condition of involvement in party politics. Now that the peasantry are eliminated it is the PDP which is most Lyonnais: 56% of its sympathizers were born in the agglomeration, compared to 39% in the electorate. Federation migrants, like those of the centre right, still originate in preference from the hinterland of the agglomeration. In contrast Christian democrats were almost as likely to have been born in the rest of France as in the Rhône-Alps region.

⁵⁷ I.e. in the departments of the Rhône-Alps region proper (Rhône, Isère, Ain, Loire, Ardèche, Drôme, Savoie, Haute Savoie) together with Jura, Haute Loire and Saône et Loire.

⁵⁸ Militants and sympathizers born outside France have been excluded. They are statistically insignificant: 11 sympathizers of the FR, one each in the PDP and Centre right samples.

Table 8: Party by Geographical Origin, 1928 to 1936 ⁵⁹ (percent)				
Party	NTA	MRA	MFR	Tot
PDP	56	23	21	62
FR	46	39	15	775
Centre Rt	46	46	8	37
Electorate	39	43	19	

Graph 10: Percentage of *Fédération républicaine* Sympathizers Born in the Agglomeration by Age



It would not, however, be wholly correct to contrast the Lyonnais origins of Christian democrats with the wider recruitment of the Federation and centre right. Since the proportion of natives of the agglomeration in the electorate declines with age, then the PDP, with its relatively low average age, would be expected to include fewer migrants. That this is indeed the case is demonstrated by Graph 10, which shows the percentage of each age group in the Federation which had been born in the agglomeration. The figure falls from 64% among those in their twenties, to 38% in the fifty-one to sixty age group, but rises again to 48% of the over sixties. Comparison with the electorate shows that natives of the agglomeration in the Federation are more or less equal to their part in the electorate as a whole for the youngest generation, but are considerably overrepresented among the over sixties.⁶⁰ Thus, the Federation was very much a 'Lyonnais' party insofar as the older (and founding) generation was concerned.⁶¹ Disappearance of overrepresentation of the Federation among younger Ly-

⁵⁹ In order to facilitate comparison with the electorate of the agglomeration, the four communes not included in Jean-Luc Pinol's study will be eliminated from the analyses which follow. I.e. St-Rambert, Francheville, Tassin la Demi-Lune and Ecully. All the comparisons in this section are from Pinol, *Espace social*, pp. 24-46.

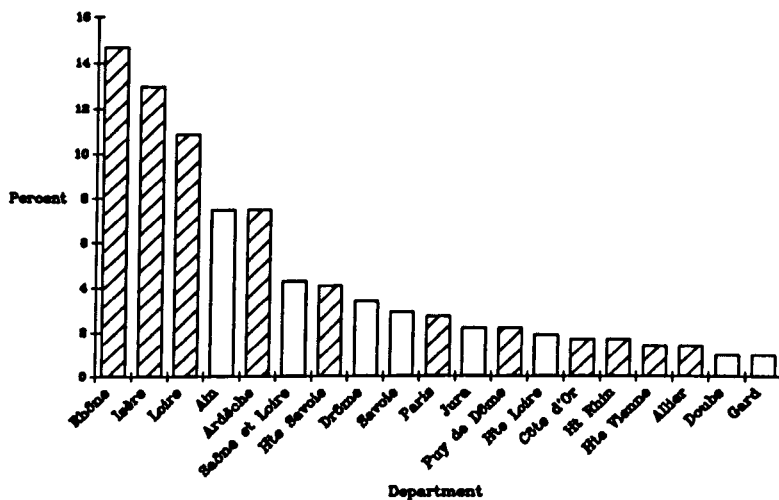
⁶⁰ 63% of electors of 25 or less were born in the city. Of the over sixties 48% were born in the agglomeration, compared to only 28% in the electorate.

⁶¹ It is impossible to say with any conviction whether younger PDP sympathizers were more 'Lyonnais' than those of the Federation. For what its worth 63% of those FR members aged forty or less were born in Lyon.

onnais probably reflects the growing appeal of PDP and CFTC to a generation which was urbanized and more likely to have been exposed to social Catholic teaching.⁶² The Federation perhaps relied more upon young members of immigrant families.

Turning our attention to migrant sympathizers of the Federation, the first point to note is that they originate, broadly speaking from the traditional demographic basin of Lyon.⁶³ Graph 11, ranks in order of importance the departments from which Federation sympathizers originated. Those departments which are overrepresented in relation to the electorate as a whole are shaded. Only those departments from which 1% or more of sympathizers originated are represented on the graph.

Graph 11: Birthplace of Federation sympathizers by Department, 1928 to June 1936



The graph shows divergences from picture presented by Jean-Luc Pinol. Some of these, such as the overrepresentation of the Haute-Vienne, are intrinsically interesting, but of little relevance to our present purpose.⁶⁴ It is more useful to ask whether those migrants sympathetic to the right were born in Catholic and right-leaning departments, for historians of the labour movement have often noted that class consciousness was slow to develop among workers who had been born in such regions. Often they saw factory work as a step up the social hierarchy.⁶⁵ The proposition could be

62 Comparison of 1930 and 1933 suggests that before and after Perret's establishment of control the percentage of Lyonnais remained more or less stable. But in other years the proportion of natives of the agglomeration fluctuates widely. Why is a mystery.

63 Jean-Luc Pinol shows that the area of recruitment to the city scarcely changed from the Revolution to the early 1930s. Distance and ease of travel were its principle determinants. *Espace social*, pp. 24 ff.

64 No less than five of the seven individuals concerned were involved in the building trades; their mean age was sixty-five; two of them were quite substantial employers.

65 See for example, Lenard R. Berlanstein, 'The Formation of a Factory Labour Force: Rubber and Cable Workers in Bezons, France (1860-1914)', *JSH*, 15, 1981-1982.

Federation militants resident in Lyon
and born in the Rhone



Scale



Map 5.18

The Federation republicaine
Militants born in the agglomeration



Scale



Map 5.19

tested by comparing the birth places of migrants with voting patterns in the late nineteenth century. But the poor quality of electoral statistics makes this problematic.⁶⁶ Comparison with the map of religious practice would perhaps be more revealing, but would be a time-consuming task.

It would also be necessary to descend to a lower level of analysis. Smallness of sample size, however, makes Map 5.18, which shows the origin by commune of migrants from the Rhône, hard to interpret.⁶⁷ There is clearly a pattern, and one which diverges from that discovered by Jean-Luc Pinol.⁶⁸ The most striking feature is the under-representation of the plateau and outer suburbs, which account for 48% of migrants in the J-L. Pinol sample, but 40% of Federation migrants. The plateau would have been more underrepresented still had J-L. Pinol used natural rather than canton boundaries.⁶⁹ Plateau migrants would most often have been small town artisans, the basis of Radicalism on the plateau. It can be concluded cautiously that migrant sympathizers from the Rhône came from more Catholic and conservative areas.

There is some evidence that rural and small-town social and religious attitudes and networks were transferred to the city. Laurent Bonnevey assiduously presided over the meetings in Lyon of the Association of Children of the Azergues Valley. Gilbert Garrier shows that in 1911 it was common for wealthy households in the vicinity of Bellecour to employ servants from their home villages, usually in the Beaujolais.⁷⁰ But it is difficult, because of lack of evidence, to link this to political alignments.

A little more light is thrown on the socio-geographic origins of conservative sympathizers by Table 9, which distinguishes between rural and urban communes of origin.⁷¹ Apart from the unsurprising fact that rural migrants were unlikely to come to Lyon from the more distant departments, the table shows that Federation migrants were more often born in rural communes than were those of either the lay centre right or the PDP. As the sample size for the centre right and PDP dwindles through successive subdivision to almost nothing, there is little more that can be said about the centre right and PDP. Nonetheless, relatively low rural recruitment of Christian democracy, together with the high proportion of natives of Lyon among its supporters, and their geographical concentration in Lyon and medium sized towns, confirms the urban

66 In the absence of countrywide electoral statistics François Goguel maps the choices of deputies in key votes. Comparison of Graph 11 with the monarchist right reveals no correlation, but if the right and centre majority of Jules Méline in 1893 is used—a majority comparable to the broader Progressist right—then the result is more interesting. F. Goguel, *Géographie des élections françaises sous la troisième et la quatrième république*, Paris, 1970, pp. 34-35.

67 57 migrants are plotted on this map.

68 Pinol, *Espace politique*, pp. 43-45. Garrier, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

69 Four of the nine Federation migrants classed as originating on the plateau were in reality mountain dwellers.

70 Gilbert Garrier, *op. cit.*, p. 486. For example, Henri Durieu, proprietor at Denicé in the Beaujolais, had five servants, all of whom had been born in that commune.

71 Conventionally those communes in which less than 2,000 of the population which lived in the *chef-lieu* are regarded as rural (not to be confused with agricultural). However, the necessary statistics, dividing communal population into concentrated and dispersed, are inaccessible. So I have been obliged to use *total* communal population in 1896 as an alternative criterion: those with more than 2,000 inhabitants are classed as urban.

horizons of the movement. On the other hand, although the centre right is a wholly urban movement in terms of geographical distribution, a significant proportion of its militants had been born in the countryside.

Table 9: Party by Type of Commune of Origin, 1928-36 (p
ercent)

	Rhône-Alps		France		
	Urb	Rur	Urb	Rur	
FR	31	43	15	12	384
PDP	29	25	33	12	24
Centre right	37	47	16	-	19

The Department

Analysis of the socio-geographic origins of sympathizers resident in the rest of the department comes up against the obstacle of a lack of comparative data on the electorate of department as a whole. We have to be content with partial comparison with samples from a few cantons. The sample consists of one in ten electors from the cantons of Tarare, St Laurent, Villefranche (excluding the commune of Villefranche), those communes of St Genis Laval which lie outside of the agglomeration,⁷² and six communes from the western and mountainous part of Mornant. It should be borne in mind that they were not chosen for their representativeness, but are simply those which had been sampled before a larger project was abandoned.⁷³ Graph 12 shows under- and overrepresentation by region of origin in the sample communes, while Table 10 gives figures for the whole of the department outside the agglomeration.

Even more than in the agglomeration the Federation appeals to the more stable part of the population. Over half of sympathizers lived in the commune or canton in which they had been born. No less than 80% had been born in the Rhône, whereas in the agglomeration only 54% of sympathizers were natives of the department. Moreover, 52% were resident in the commune in which they had been born, while much of the intra-departmental mobility concerned very short distances.⁷⁴ Of course, these contrasts are largely a function the Federation's peasant base in the countryside.⁷⁵

⁷² That is, the communes of Brindas, Brignais, Charly, St Genis Laval, Irigny, Vernaison and Vourles, to which have been attached one neighbouring commune from the canton of Mornant—Orlienas.

⁷³ Surprisingly, the geographical origins of Federation sympathizers in these communes and cantons are remarkably similar to those in the department as a whole. The only real difference is that there are rather more natives of the agglomeration in the sample than among Federation members in the department as a whole. Of course, this does not mean that the sample of the electorate has the same approximation to the electorate as a whole.

⁷⁴ A sample from the electorate as a whole reveals that 37% of migrants in the canton of Villefranche (Villefranche town excluded), were from Ain—presumably adjacent communes. A further 19% came from Saône et Loire. In the western canton of St Laurent de Chamousset nearly three quarters were from the neighbouring Loire.

⁷⁵ 15 out of 21 PDP sympathizers had also been born in the department, in spite of the weakness of Christian democracy among the agricultural population.

This confirms the importance of established peasant families to the Federation. In the commune of Messimy all twelve members of the conservative list in the municipal elections of 1935 had been born in the commune; four on the opposing list had been born elsewhere.⁷⁶

Graph 12: Origins of *Fédération républicaine* sympathizers in selected communes

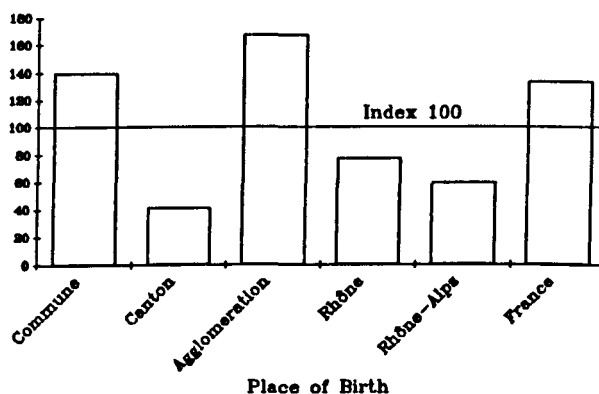


Table 10: Origins of the *Fédération républicaine*. The department.

Origin	Percent
Lives in commune of birth	52
Migration within canton	8
Migration within Rhône	12
Agglomération	9
Rhône-Alpes	14
France	6
Total	1065

Also overrepresented are sympathizers who had been born in the agglomeration: Lyon itself in the overwhelming majority of cases.⁷⁷ Most of them were bourgeois. Map 5.19 shows that the majority resided in the *grand banlieu*, stretching from the Monts d'Or in the North to Givors in the south. More interesting is the scattering of sympathizers in the rest of the department, for they appear to correspond with areas in which the organization of the Federation was less sketchy than usual, and where, moreover, Victor Perret found support. The Lyon-born are found in those

⁷⁶ Pin, op. cit., p. 114.

⁷⁷ 106 out of 111 were born in Lyon.

parts of the Beaujolais *viticole* from which Alexandre Bosse-Platière drew much of his support. Others resided in the canton of Arbresle, which was the only rural area in which Perret's allies the *Jeunesses patriotes* were organized. Thirdly there are three natives of Lyon in the canton of St Laurent, two of whom were members of the *Comité départemental*.⁷⁸ A number of cantonal congresses were organized in St Laurent by Victor Perret's associate Alexandre La Batie, a landowner and ex-officer. La Batie lived in both the commune of Montromand and the 6th arrondissement of Lyon, where he was also a member of the Federation committee.⁷⁹

That over time the proportion of Federation sympathizers living in the commune in which they had been born fell from 55% to 50% need not detain us, for it was a function of a similar drop in the recruitment of farmers to the party. More significant perhaps is a fairly substantial rise in the proportion of migrants who had been born in rural communes (50% in 1928 to 1931; 60% in 1932 to June 1936). As in the city it seems that Victor Perret's rule over the Federation led to increase in the importance of migrants of a rural background.

This survey of the socio-geographic origins sympathizers of the parliamentary right leaves many questions unanswered, and others postponed until place of birth can be brought into relation with other influences on political behaviour. We can nevertheless conclude that at the level of leadership, in both the city and in those areas of the countryside where its organizational structures were more developed, the Federation was a party of the city-born individuals. Meanwhile the mass base of the party comprised a large number of people who had spent their lives in their commune of birth, and of individuals who had come to the city from rural communes. Christian democracy, on the other hand, recruited individuals who were much more accustomed to urban life. Once again this points to the dependence of the Federation on declining modes of social and political integration.

Class structure of the Right

There are three main problems involved in analysing the class structure of the right. The distortion caused by failure to ascertain the professions of some individuals has already been noted.⁸⁰ The sources of bias are to some extent known and can be allowed for. The second problem is the imprecision which follows from self-recording of profession in the electoral lists. The main difficulty is in distinguishing between artisans and employed craftsmen in trades such as shoemaking and carpentry. Trade directories permit the resolution of the majority of cases, but we are left with a residual category of 'workers or artisans'.⁸¹ Third, for some individuals we have to choose

⁷⁸ See page (?).

⁷⁹ He was not, however, a native of the agglomeration.

⁸⁰ See Appendix 4 and page 101.

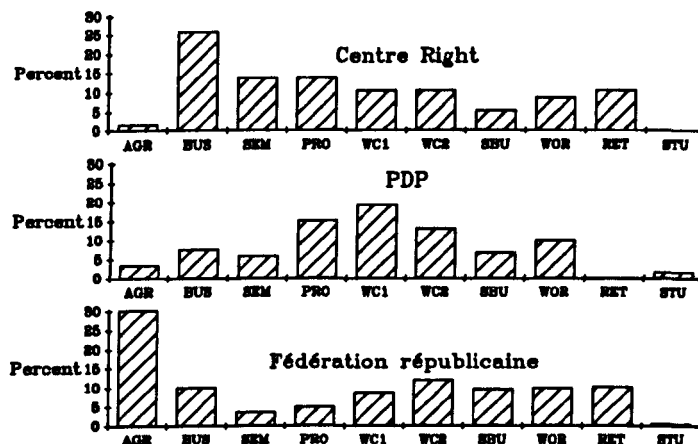
⁸¹ This is the solution adopted by Jean-Luc Pinol. Most likely those whose status remains unknown were workers, for artisans would surely have been listed in trade directories.

between professions given in several sources. The solution adopted was to prefer the more up to date and precise information in the censuses, supplemented if necessary by trade directories.⁸²

In the case of Graph 13 all sources have been combined in order to give the most accurate picture possible. There differences between the parties are almost certainly too large to be a product of the mode of sampling. The contemporary view of a centre right dominated by business appears to be valid. Merchants and industrialists, representing 26% of sympathizers, are easily the largest category. Together with senior managers they represent no less than 40% of the total, while 54% were drawn from the ruling class in its broadest sense.

The PDP, in contrast, is essentially a party of white collar workers; 50% of sympathizers are in the two categories of employees. As in the CFTC there is a bias towards higher grade employees. The PDP also draws much support from secondary school teachers and the liberal professions, confirming the appeal of social Catholicism to the younger generation of Catholic intellectuals. And like the CFTC the PDP is relatively weak among manual workers. Complete absence of retired and inactive persons, together with the presence of a few students, reflects the age structure of the party.

Graph 13: The Parliamentary Right by Social Class, 1928 to 1935⁸³
(percent)



The Federation comes closest to being an inter-class party. It alone has a significant following among farmers, who with 30% of sympathizers represent the single most

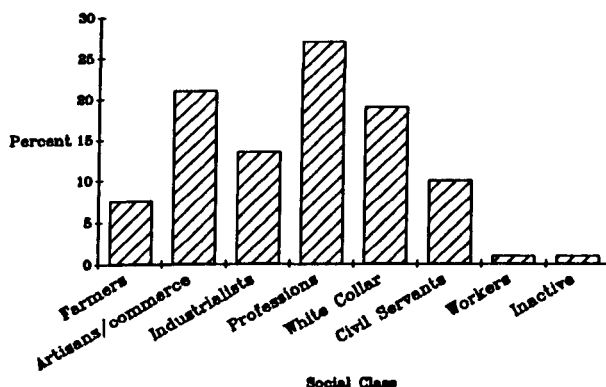
⁸² The professions included within each category can be found in Appendix 5.

⁸³ In order to make the best of small centre right sample the few individuals active in the period after June 1936 have been added to this sample. The number of persons for whom profession is known therefore rises from 53 to 58. The Federation sample consists of 2,088 persons.

important group. Second in importance are lower grade white collar workers. The Federation was the least bourgeois of the three parties, though it was quite well-represented among businessmen.⁸⁴ The Federation did better than its rivals in categories where the right was electorally weak: small business (shopkeepers and artisans) and workers. There is some truth in the claim of Victor Perret that the party was a popular one, but it is probable that the weight of suburban communes in the sample reduces the importance of the bourgeoisie.

At a global level it is, regrettably, not possible to compare the class profile of the parliamentary right with that of the left. The best which can be managed are two partial comparisons. The first is with the delegates to the executive committee of the Radical-Socialist party, as analysed by Serge Berstein.⁸⁵ His figures for the Rhône are shown in Graph 14. Strictly speaking it would be more appropriate to place these individuals alongside the 'middle cadres' of the Federation. Furthermore, the categories used, by S Berstein, those of the *Statistique générale*, are not directly comparable to our own. But some points can be made.

Graph 14: Delegates to the Executive Committee of the Radical-Socialist Party in the Rhône by class, 1922 to 1938



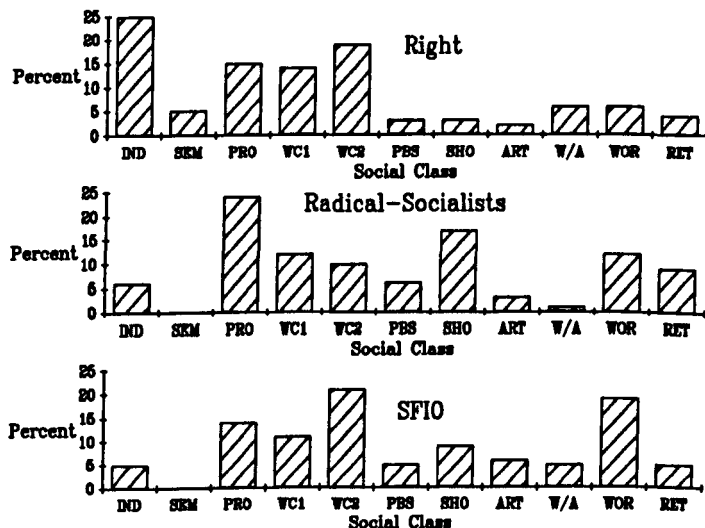
Like the Federation and centre right the Radicals are well represented among industrialists. This might result from a broader definition, but it nonetheless reminds us that the right had no monopoly on their allegiance. Radical support in the peasantry was significant, but did not match that of the right. It is also worth noting certain similarities between Radicalism and the PDP. In both the largest category is the liberal pro-

⁸⁴ The centre right included 54% of students, liberal professions, businessmen and senior managers, the PDP 31%, and the Federation 19%.

⁸⁵ Berstein, *Histoire du Parti radical*, pp. 259-265.

fessions.⁸⁶ Both also drew support from the lower middle class--though the Radicals were to a greater extent a party of the self-employed and civil servants.

Graph 15: Candidates in Municipal Elections, Lyon, 1929 and 1935



In the commune of Lyon it possible to make a further comparison of conservative municipal council candidates⁸⁷ in 1929 and 1935 with those of the Radicals and SFIO. Lists for these elections do not necessarily comprise a genuine sample of leading activists. The right usually included a token worker. But manipulation of party image had to be balanced against the desire of voters to be represented by their own kind, not to speak of the imperatives of faction fighting.

Graph 14 shows that apart from the fact that lower grade white collar workers are more numerous than higher, perhaps because of the presence of PDP representatives, the class profile of candidates is very similar to that of the Federation's departmental council.⁸⁸ In general, the breakdown of Radical candidates endorses Serge Bernstein's figures, except that suspicions about the level of businessmen appear to be justified. Workers are quite well-represented, testifying to the continued importance of working class Republicanism. The SFIO is better represented than its rivals among artisans and waged manual workers. Rather more interesting is that socialists did about as well as the right among white collar workers of both grades, illustrating once more that salaried employees constitute the disputed middle ground of social

⁸⁶ Note, however, that Serge Bernstein includes journalists with the liberal professions, a group I have categorised with higher grade white collar workers.

⁸⁷ The right wing lists include a few centre right and PDP activists.

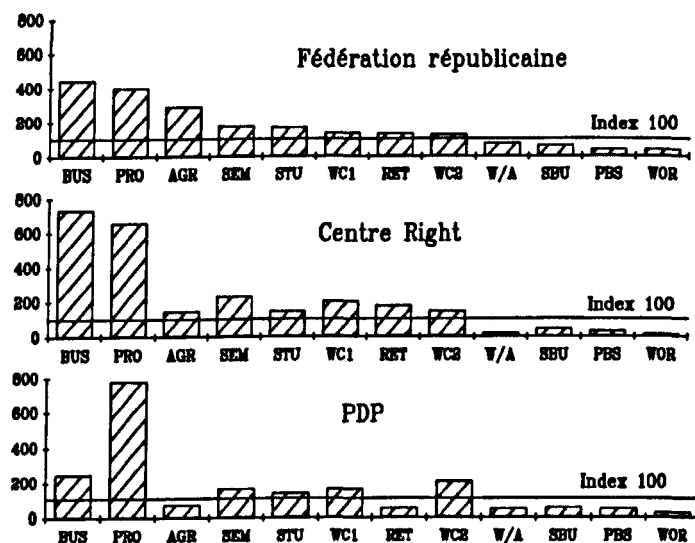
⁸⁸ See Graph 18.

politics. Lastly there were a significant number of professional people on socialist lists. But whereas lawyers were common in conservative and Radical parties, the socialists were more likely to be academics—such as the economics professor and future Minister of Finance André Philip.

A Bourgeois Right?

So far we have seen that whilst the occupational structures of the parties considered differ substantially, all nevertheless recruit from a wide variety of groups. White collar workers are particularly divided in their politics. What then is the relationship of the parliamentary right to the bourgeoisie? In particular there is the question of the relationship of the right to business. Jean-Noël Jeanneney concludes in his two studies of this question that the 'political realm is entirely autonomous from the economic sphere'.⁸⁹ A response, of course, cannot be formulated solely in quantitative terms. Nevertheless, one way of looking at the question is to ask whether businessmen show a greater propensity to become involved in conservative political activity than do other social groups.

Graph 16: The Parliamentary Right in the Agglomeration⁹⁰ by Class, 1928 to 1936



⁸⁹ Jeanneney, *François de Wendel en République*, p. 134, and *L'Argent Caché*, pp. 44-46. Part of his evidence is the relatively insignificant role of businessmen in Parliament—16% of deputies in 1928 (see M. Dogan, 'Les filières de la carrière politique en France', *Revue française de sociologie*, 3, 1967, pp. 468-492). In fact 16% is an extremely high figure given the proportion of businessmen in the population. And the figure for the right alone is much higher than 16%.

⁹⁰ In order to include the four western suburban communes in the analysis, I have added my own one in ten sample of their electorates to the figures of Jean-Luc Pinol. These communes are Francheville, Tassin le Demi Lune, Ecully and St Rambert.

The question is not difficult to answer for the agglomeration. In order to make sense of Graph 16 it should be borne in mind that in order to make possible comparison with the class structure of the electorate, profession on electoral list alone has been used. This explains the greater importance of the 'workers or artisans' category.⁹¹ Also, the contribution of the bourgeoisie declines when this source alone is used, because inscription at a young age does not take account of subsequent social mobility. A final point to be borne in mind is that municipal election years have been excluded from the analysis in the case of the Federation. Otherwise, the numerous peasants on the party's lists distorts the sample.

The results are much as expected. In the Federation businessmen are the most overrepresented category, although the liberal professions are not far behind. There is a steady decrease moving down the social scale through the liberal professions, senior managers, higher and lower grade white collar workers. Like its rivals the Federation is underrepresented in categories where the left did well: workers or artisans, public services, small business and the manual working class.

The only real anomaly is the strong showing of farmers in the Federation, even though municipal election years have been excluded.⁹² True, if profession is taken from census rather than electoral register, then the proportion of farmers declines, reflecting the fact that inscription on electoral list often represents occupation on arrival in the city rather than current activity. All the same, political activity of farmers resident on the margins of the city remains surprisingly high. One explanation could be that in such a region only the wealthiest farmers could avoid selling off their land to developers.⁹³

For the rest of the department under- and over-representation can be calculated only for the indeterminately representative communes for which a survey of the electoral lists was carried out (see Graph 17).⁹⁴ Here too businessmen, representing 11% of Federation sympathizers compared to 2% of the population, are easily the most overrepresented category. They are followed by the other bourgeois categories. Farmers make up almost half of rural sympathizers in absolute terms, but are a little less well represented than in the electorate at large. Both categories of white collar workers, in contrast to their position in the agglomeration, are underrepresented. As expected, small businessmen and especially workers also show little interest in the right.

However the sample is broken down businessmen show a greater propensity to become involved in the Federation and especially the centre right than any other

⁹¹ 'Workers or artisans' in the Federation fall from 9% when electoral list alone is used to 1% when all sources are used.

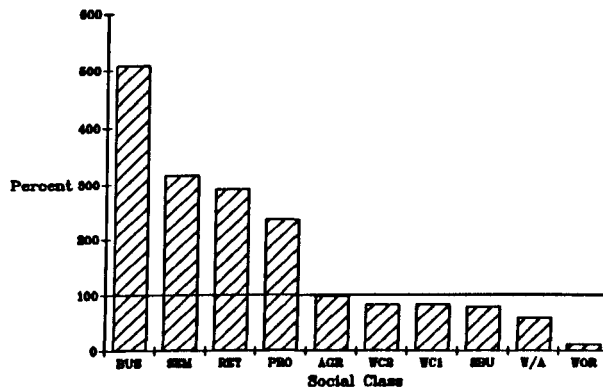
⁹² There are, as we have seen, other reasons too for over-estimation of the number of sympathizers from the suburbs.

⁹³ In Vénissieux the Federation drew support from wealthy rose growers like Croibier-Fluttaz.

⁹⁴ See page 123.

social group. Were it not for the perverse refusal of historians like J-N. Jeanneney to accept that conservatism has anything to do with the defence of capitalism, the point would hardly be worth labouring. But in view of the small proportion of the total electorate who were involved in business, the real level of political commitment of employers must have been very high indeed. It is true that professionals are not far behind. Were all parties of left and right to be taken into account it is probable that no other group could match them for political consciousness. In the municipal elections of 1935 in Villeurbanne all three competing lists were led by doctors.⁹⁵ But whereas

Graph 17: Federation Sympathizers in Sample Communes by Class, 1928 to June 1936



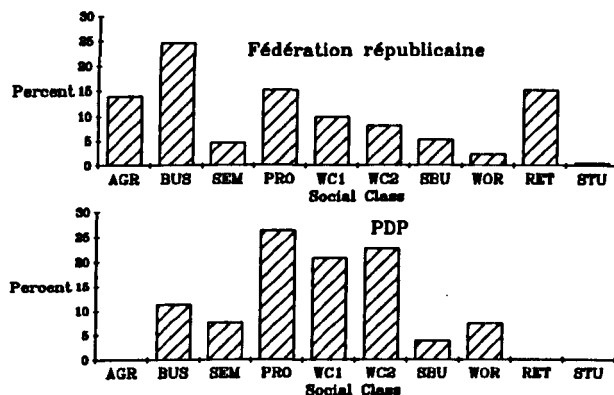
professionals were as attracted to the SFIO as to the Federation, businessmen were rather more choosy. Lawyers, academics and doctors, because of their training, functioned as professional politicians, so their importance was greater among the leaders of the Federation.

Party Leaders

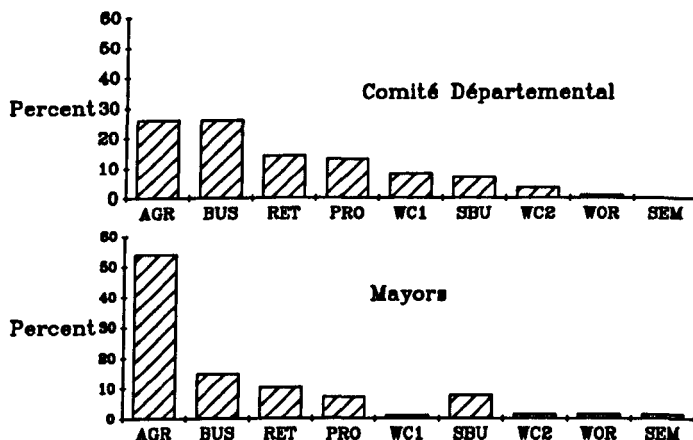
Let us start with the 'middle cadres' of the Federation. Not surprisingly the class profile of the *Comité départemental* of the Federation is substantially different to that of militants and sympathizers as a whole (see Graph 18). Now the ruling class represents 45% of the total. Businessmen become the largest group. The retired, who include a number of semi-active businessmen, move into equal second place along with the liberal professions. Senior managers, on the other hand, increase less dramatically—from 4 to 5%. The main losers are farmers and workers: the former lose about half of their representation, the latter about three-quarters.

⁹⁵ Dr. Grandclément for the PCF, Dr. Goujon for the SFIO and Dr. Gautheron for the Federation.

Graph 18: Social class of members of the *Comité départemental*, 1928 to June 1936⁹⁶



Graph 19: Militants and Mayors in the Countryside, 1928 to June 1926



Outside of the city it is essential to distinguish the cadres of the Federation proper from the notables who served as links between party and masses in rural areas. This can be done by comparing members of the Federation's *Comité départemental* with pro-Federation mayors. Graph 19 shows that farmers are twice as numerous in the latter. The only other group to be better represented among mayors than in the *Comité départemental* is small businessmen, essentially shopkeepers and artisans—doubtless as well-integrated into agricultural society as were farmers them-

⁹⁶ Sample sizes are 171 for the Federation and 53 for the PDP.

selves. Business-mayors were a rarity in communes situated outside either the outer suburbs of Lyon, the small industrial towns of the Beaujolais mountains or the Brévenne Valley. Those businessmen who were mayors of rural communes sometimes benefited from exceptional notoriety. Such was the case with François Gillet, mayor of Bully, birthplace of the founder of the dynasty.

A sample of members of the departmental executive committee of the PDP, together with presidents and vice-presidents of local sections, shows the same shift towards the ruling class as in the Federation (see Graph 18). Businessmen substantially increase their representation,⁹⁷ while the liberal professions become the most numerous group. Yet with 35% of the total the ruling class is weaker than in the Federation. White collar workers remain very well represented, though lower grade employees decline relative to higher.

Because sample size is limited it is not possible to produce a comparable graph for the centre right. Nonetheless, comparison of the class breakdown of the *Comité départemental* of the Federation with that of the centre right in Graph 13 is again revealing. Significant differences are once again the greater appeal of the Federation to farmers, and of the centre right to senior managers. Surprisingly, workers are better represented in the centre right than in the *Comité départemental* of the Federation, though numerical weakness may explain this. In other respects the graphs are similar, weighted towards the ruling class and especially businessmen.

Table 11: Departmental leaders of the Parliamentary right.			
	FR	CD	PDP
AGR	3	-	-
BUS	12	7	1
SEM	2	5	-
PRO	16	4	8
WC1	2	2	1
WC2	2	1	2
PCO	-	-	1
RET	5	1	-
Total	42	20	13

At the level of departmental leadership the role of the bourgeoisie becomes still more preponderant. But as Table 11 shows, each retains its specificity. In the Federation the liberal professions become the most important category. No doubt they alone possessed the leisure necessary for a position of responsibility in a relatively

⁹⁷ Six of the nine PDP business sympathizers are found among the leaders of the party.

well-structured party like the Federation. But involvement of businessmen remains considerable. Furthermore the five leaders of the Federation in the Rhône since its foundation——Aynard, Huvelin, Isaac, Peissel and Perret——had all been businessmen.

In the centre right employers are the most numerous category. Again, with the exception of Dr. Augros, the party leaders were businessmen: Edmond Weitz, Etienne Fougère and Eugène Mansuy. It is also noteworthy that senior managers are more common in the inner circles of the centre right than in the Federation, just as they were at other levels of the party. Finally, the PDP was led almost entirely by members of the liberal professions. Both departmental leaders in our period——Jacques Tourret and Charles Bryon——were lawyers.

In spite of the bourgeois nature of the leadership of the three parties, we are still not wholly justified in concluding that we are in the presence of a bourgeois right. There are two ways of looking at the problem. It is, on the one hand, possible to stress the very significant over-representation of businessmen among sympathizers, and their still greater proportion in the party leadership. On the other, the *numerical* predominance of non-bourgeois groups could be stressed. In fact, the two perspectives are not mutually exclusive. It is possible to say that the Federation is a bourgeois and a capitalist party, but also to give due weight to its dependence upon non-bourgeois groups for support. Since the economic interests of the latter did not always coincide with those of the elites, who were themselves divided on fundamental issues, we are obliged to look at non-economic ways of defining the right. The need to secure mass support gives any conservative party a certain autonomy from the capitalism.

Businessmen

For the moment, however, our task is to continue with the quantitative analysis, and to look more closely at the nature of the social groups who supported the right, beginning with businessmen.

First, was there a relationship between scale of enterprise and support for any of the right wing parties? Evidence from trade directories and the press makes it safe to assume that those classed as businessmen in the sample were mainly at the head of substantial concerns. That a great number describe themselves in the electoral lists as either 'négociant' or 'industrial' is another reason for confidence, for small businessmen in France had good fiscal reasons for not exaggerating their importance. We have also seen that as a rule small business preferred the left.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Radical candidates for the municipal council of Lyon in 1929 include the President of the trade association of pork butchers, and Jean Veuille, President of the Syndicate of Hoteliers, and representative of small traders in the Chamber of Commerce. Artisans, on the other hand, appear to have been split between Radicals and the SFIO. In the 1929 municipal elections one socialist candidate described himself as director of a carpenters' cooperative.

It is more difficult to distinguish between medium and large firms, or between monopoly and non-monopoly capital. All that can be said is that Federation sympathizers included a significant number of businessmen of substantial importance, some of whom were genuine representatives of monopoly capital. Auguste Isaac's interests included the PLM and the board of the Suez Company, reputedly the most lucrative directorship in France. Also present are Edmund Gillet and his son-in-law Henry Balay, boss of a Gillet subsidiary, the *Société de colorantes de France*. It would be possible to give perhaps a dozen or more such examples. The main point is that although such people constitute a small proportion of total adherents, big capitalists were extremely rare in the electorate as a whole. Probably, however, the capture of the Federation by Victor Perret involved a loss of influence by such elite businessmen.⁹⁹ Whilst, for example, the Gillet family had a representative in the sample throughout the 1930s, monopoly capitalists did not occupy leading positions in the Federation as they had in previous decades.

Increasingly typical of business support for the Federation was the medium to large family firm, of which Victor Perret's own luxury silk manufacturing business provides a good example. Smaller family firms are also present. The building trades, and wine, coal and fruit wholesalers in the countryside, stand out in this respect. But the centre of gravity probably lies with medium to large businessmen, especially when their infrequency in the electorate is taken into account.

In spite of the smallness of the sample big businessmen were proportionately more prominent in the centre right. There were two bankers.¹⁰⁰ Edmond Weitz's own firm was a *société anonyme*, and he sat on the boards of steelmaking, brewing and housing companies. Some of these big capitalists, including Auguste Isaac, turned to the Alliance out of disgust at the policies of Victor Perret. Bosses of medium firms were also present. Etienne Fougère was at the head of a large family firm, while Eugène Mansuy ran a wholesale pottery enterprise. Only one centre right businessman was definitely identifiable as the head of a small firm. The PDP, in contrast, recruited no businessman of any real importance. François Perrier, owner of a small tie making concern, is representative.

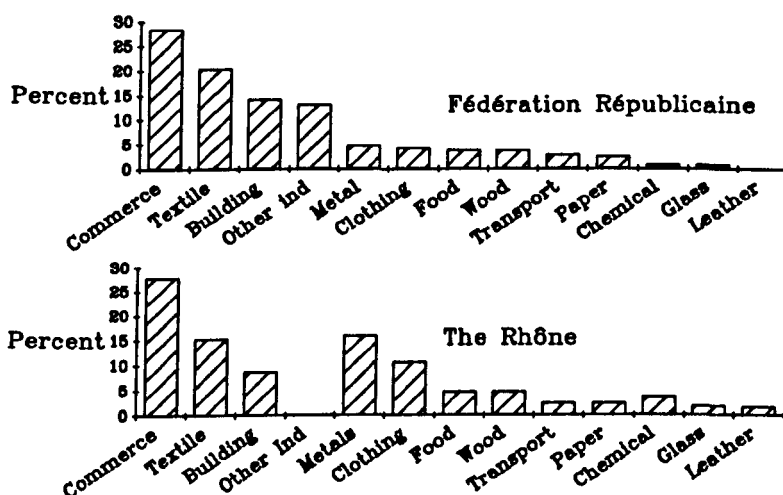
In Chapter four it was argued that conflict within business is to be explained at least as much by sector of activity as by size of enterprise. It was suggested that engineering and some large silk employers were influenced by the neo-capitalist ideas popular in the late 1920s, and that these in turn provided a link to the lay centre right. Meanwhile, the modishness of neo-capitalism, provoked a 'traditionalist' reaction led by employers in the merchant-manufacturing branch of the silk industry, and which was expressed through Victor Perret's wing of the Federation.

⁹⁹ See Chapter 6.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Valayer and Daniel Isaac.

If the hypothesis is correct, then we ought to find supporting evidence in the backgrounds of business sympathizers of the parties in question. Smallness of sample size, however, means that quantitative testing of the proposition is feasible only for the Federation. Using trade directories it is possible to determine with some accuracy the sector of activity of all but a few businessmen in that party.¹⁰¹ They are broken down in Graph 20.¹⁰² A guide to the sectoral breakdown of businessmen in the population as a whole is provided by charting the number of establishments employing six or more workers, as recorded in the census of 1936. Given the dubious nature of Lyonnais censuses, the absence of an automatic relationship between number of establishments and number of businessmen, and the failure to identify the sector of activity of some Federation businessmen, this can only be a rough guide.

Graph 20: Industrialists of the Federation by sector of activity



Graph 20 supports the hypothesis that the Federation has a special relationship with certain parts of the textile industry. The backward cotton manufacturers of the Beaujolais mountains are well represented. What is more, cotton manufacturers were almost unanimous in opting for Victor Perret in his quarrel with Laurent Bonnevey

101 That is individuals defined as businessmen when all sources are brought together.

102 The categories used are based on those of the *Statistique générale*. The category 'other industrial' groups those whose sector of activity is unknown, together with one or two minority activities which are difficult to classify. Commercial enterprises have been grouped together in order to avoid unnecessary complication of the graph. Division of the silk industry into commercial and industrial branches is problematic. *Commissionnaires en soieries* and *négociants en soies* are regarded as commercial. *Marchands de soie* and *fabricants de soieries* are classed as industrialists.

after 1934.¹⁰³ Beaujolais cotton manufacturers were also numerous among the supporters of *Action Française*, of which the ideas were close to those of Victor Perret. The cotton merchants of Villefranche provide an exception to this pattern. Like businessmen in the Beaujolais mountains they were Catholic and socially conservative. But a long struggle with the crypto-royalist landowning aristocracy of the surrounding countryside pushed them towards the centre right.

Given that most silk firms produced a mixture of products, often using both factories and *façonniers*, it is difficult to make sense of the allegiances of the silk industry. All the same, there is some evidence that the Federation was favoured by the more traditional sectors of the *fabrique*. Of the twenty-seven *fabricants* known to have sympathized with the Federation, nineteen can be found in the membership lists of the SFS.¹⁰⁴ Seven of them (plus at least one of the non-unionized), were members of Group One, of which the President was Victor Perret himself.¹⁰⁵ Firms in this group used gold and silver thread and highly skilled labour to produce braid and church decorations.¹⁰⁶ They had much to lose from the decline of a certain kind of production and consumption. They were most numerous in the Croix Rousse.

The other silk employers were mainly at the head of family firms. Eight had factories of their own. None of them were particularly noted for their commitment to industrial or social progress.¹⁰⁷ We saw in chapter four that a growing number of medium and small factory owners put some of their work out to *façonniers*, and were increasingly suspicious of headlong industrialization. It is also significant that whereas a large number of *fabricants* supported the Federation, only two of their hereditary enemies, the *gros façonniers*, are known to have backed the party. One of these, President of the *Syndicat des tisseurs mécanique* Jean Monamy, was a on the far left of the party. He was more likely to be found at meetings of the CFTC than the Federation.

Finally, there is qualitative evidence of the Catholic and conservative atmosphere in the silk industry. A pro-Radical *fabricant* wrote to Senator Justin Godart, that 'vu mes idées politiques je n'ai pas bien l'oreille du milieu dans lequel j'opère'.¹⁰⁸ The *Nouvelliste*, and *Nouveau journal*, both sympathetic to the Federation, frequently echoed the concerns of the silk industry.

¹⁰³ Perhaps significantly one of only three businessmen who backed Bonnevey made metal combs for the weaving industry. That Emile Daurière was also an arrondissement councillor might, however, be of greater significance.

¹⁰⁴ *Bulletin annuel du Syndicat des fabricants de soieries de Lyon*, 1928 and 1935. These list one or more sections of the syndicat to which each firm had adhered.

¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, 6 of these 8 produced only this kind of cloth. Only one in ten of all members of Group One in 1928 did so.

¹⁰⁶ A typical product was a portrait of King Albert of Belgium, the work of Perret's company.

¹⁰⁷ The one possible exception is the presence of Sonnery-Cottet, a member of the board of the *Manufacture des velours et peluches*.

¹⁰⁸ Godart Papers, Carton 1, Fructus to Godart, 28-9-1935.

Some fabricants did, however, support either the Radicals or the lay centre right. Although it is dangerous to generalize from individual cases, it is surely significant that Etienne Fougère, Vice-president of *Redressment français* should also have led the centre right in Lyon in the 1920s. Also among the supporters of the centre right was Pierre Clayette, son-in-law of the innovative Henry Bertrand and manager of the family firm. The latter had at one time been a supporter of Edouard Aynard, which illustrates again that the Alliance took on the mantle of the pre-war Federation.

The Federation, as predicted, is quite significantly under-represented in the metallurgical sector. Since however there are only a dozen businessmen in the centre right sample it is not possible to test quantitatively the hypothesis of a link between engineering and the centre right. Only one out of twelve centre right businessmen are known to have been metallurgists. All the same the evidence for such a link is compelling. In the first place there is the presence at the head of the Alliance of Weitz, President until 1936 of the CSIM. It is unlikely that Weitz's political activities would have been tolerated had he not reflected widely held views among engineers. Furthermore, Weitz emphasized publicly the connection between his economic and political activities. At a meeting of the Mascaraud Committee in 1928 Weitz described himself as spokesman of both metallurgists and the Alliance, going on to claim that engineering was, in contrast to the 'feudal' silk industry, 'the most democratic of industries'. As far as is known his view of the engineering industry was contested by no-one.¹⁰⁹

There is scattered evidence that the engineering industry's sympathies went to the Radicals as well as to the centre right. *Lyon républicain*, a pro-Radical daily, showed greater interest in the fortunes of the engineering industry. In December 1935 a series of special reports on this industry were written by Guy Aroud, a journalist who had recently passed from the Alliance to the Radicals. One or two leading Radicals were metallurgists. Philippe Vermorel, head of a firm making agricultural implements in Villefranche, was a Radical senator in the 1920s. François Grammont, boss of an electrical and telephone company, was a Radical candidate in the 6th arrondissement of Lyon in the elections of 1936.

Without further research it is difficult to comment in detail on the other sectors represented on Graph 20. Most of the commercial employers were at the head of larger concerns. Perhaps typical is Julien de Poumeyrol, a wholesaler of medicinal herbs and for some years president of the UCS. Wine wholesalers were numerous in the areas around the entrepôts of Vaise.¹¹⁰ There are also a number of extremely wealthy traders, such as the silk importer Charles Mouterde. The only generalization

¹⁰⁹ *Nouvelliste*, 6-3-1928.

¹¹⁰ A few were also found in rural areas, with the exception of the wine-growing area, where wine merchants were traditionally the rivals of large landowners.

that it is possible to make is that commercial interests had little interest in progressive industrial and social ideas, and favoured a liberal economic order.

After the textile industries, the most important industrial sector is building and construction. A possible explanation is a somewhat loose definition of what constitutes an industrial concern, for all those referred to in the sources as 'entrepreneurs' are classed in this way. But in many cases there is clear evidence that these were larger than average firms. Many were limited liability companies. That larger firms favoured the Federation is perhaps confirmed by the fact that Pierre Roiret, President of the *Chambre syndicale du Bâtiment* and a member of the Chamber of Commerce, endorsed the Federation's candidate in the 7th arrondissement in 1932. It is possible that building employers were pushed to the right by their long conflict with the powerful anarcho-syndicalist *Cartel du bâtiment*.¹¹¹ Medium and large firms may also have been alienated from the Radicals by conflict with small masters, often accused of undermining patronal solidarity during the strikes.

In sum, the pattern of business support for the parliamentary right confirms the analysis of business politics presented in Chapter four. This is not to argue that conflicts within the Federation or between Federation and centre right can be reduced to the question of neo-capitalism, only that it was *part* of what was at issue. There are too many exceptions for this to have been the case. There were metallurgists who were both Catholics and supporters of the Federation, such as the steelmaking Prénat family in Givors. Marius Berliet, perhaps the most modernist of all Lyonnais businessmen, was a Legitimist. We have also seen that there were *fabricants* who were Radicals and anti-clericals. As we saw in Chapter four conservative reformism and the resistance to it was most effective where it coincided with cultural cleavages in the business class.

Senior Managers

We have already seen that senior managers and engineers make up a greater proportion of centre right than Federation militants. It seems reasonable to conclude that there was within the centre right a tacit alliance of dynamic businessmen and the cadres of the modern enterprise. But a significant number of engineers and managers also supported the Federation. There is some evidence that in both cases politics and religion bound them to employers in a partnership in which the businessmen were dominant. In consequence organizations of engineers and managers were as politically divided as the patronat. It should be noted, however, that this division did not match that between traditionalist and modern industries, for engineers were rare in the older industries. Sectoral breakdown of pro-Federation engineers and managers

¹¹¹ On the *Cartel du bâtiment* see M. Moissonier, 'Le Cartel du bâtiment', *Cahiers de l'Institut Maurice Thorez*, 1980.

shows that they were found in large silk and artificial fibre firms, chemical factories like Rhône-Poulenc and in metallurgical establishments like Berliet. Rather the division was cultural and religious.

Direct influence of employers over managers was probably rare. The example of the Trayvoux engineering factory was given in Chapter four is perhaps an exception.¹¹² Several representatives of the senior management of the pro-Federation press turn up amongst that party's sympathizers, including, for example, Antoine Jouve, head of publicity at the *Nouveau journal*.¹¹³ Probably this kind of influence was mainly confined to small and medium firms.¹¹⁴

It is more likely that patronal and political hegemony was established indirectly through mixed employer-engineer associations. Often these were societies of former pupils of engineering schools, which shows once again the contribution of education, social mobility and religion to conservative politics. In the metallurgical industry employers and Radical politicians patronized a *Société amicale des chefs de service, chefs d'atelier et contremaîtres*, while the rival Catholic syndicate of metallurgical employers, sponsored an association of former pupils of the *Ecole d'apprentissage supérieure*, run by abbé Lamache.¹¹⁵ We saw in Chapter four that this school made a special efforts to produce draughtsmen for the engineering industry. USIC, the strongest general association of engineers was a social Catholic association which made no distinction between employers and employees.

There is hardly any evidence in the political sphere that engineers and managers saw themselves as a group with special interests. Claudius Chaland, an engineer at the chemical firm Givaudan-Lavirotte, was a leading member of USIC, as well as President of the Federation's youth group and Vice-president of the committee of the 3rd arrondissement. But he made no mention of the interests of his profession before 1936. Professional associations often discussed general issues. At the meeting of the *Société amicale* mentioned above, the main topic of discussion was Japanese competition.¹¹⁶ USIC was concerned with defence of the status of engineering qualifications.¹¹⁷ In the short term this elitism reinforced the identity of engineers with their

¹¹² Robert, op. cit., passim.

¹¹³ It might be more than coincidental that three Catholic and conservative engineers turn up at a small engineering firm, the Chantiers de Gerland. One was Louis Chassagnon, brother of the bishop of Autun. The other two were *Croix de Feu* and PSF militants.

¹¹⁴ Marc Maurice describes this kind of situation, where patron and engineer work side-by-side, in a relatively small firm, with a clear dichotomy between workers and the patron and his collaborators, as 'pre-administrative'. Marc Maurice, 'L'évolution du travail et du syndicalisme chez les cadres', MS, 61, 1967, pp. 47-64, especially pp. 60-62. See also I. Kolboom, 'Patronat et cadres: la contribution patronale à la formation du groupe des cadres', MS, 121, 1982, pp. 71-95, especially p. 72.

¹¹⁵ It is significant that the activities of the *Société amicale* were reported in the pro-centre right (at that time) *Lyon Républicain*, 29-1-34, whereas meetings of the rival Catholic association were reported in the *Nouvelliste*, 2-11-1929, 31-10-30.

¹¹⁶ Maurice, op. cit., pp. 49-50. Maurice argues that engineers were a 'mere appendage of the patronat' before 1936.

¹¹⁷ *La Chronique sociale*, March, 1934.

employers.¹¹⁸ Put in the longer term this corporatism provided a bridge to the *Croix de Feu* and PSF.

White collar workers

In view of the absence of comparative data it is not really possible at this stage to say much that has not already been said about the other social groups which supported the parliamentary right. The general characteristics of party sympathisers usually hold for each group taken separately. At this stage it is necessary only to say something of white collar workers and peasants.

Federation white collar workers are older than both those in the electorate as a whole and those in the PDP. The former are overrepresented in the 4th and 5th arrondissements, the latter in the 3rd, 5th and 6th. PDP white collar workers are considerably more likely to have been born in the agglomeration than those of the Federation, and are less likely to have migrated from rural communes.¹¹⁹

It may be concluded that the Federation depended for recruitment upon the transfer of deferential Catholic attitudes from the countryside into areas like the Croix Rousse where parish politics were dominated by the 'old bourgeoisie'. Perhaps typical was the President of the Corporation of silk employees Albert Gruffaz. He lived on the slopes of the Croix Rousse, and had been born in the rural commune of Bonneguete in Haute Savoie in 1868. Gruffaz had been initiated into the virtues of the Franciscans by his uncle. It should nevertheless be born in mind that even Federation sympathisers are somewhat more likely than the electorate in general to be native born or to have originated from urban France. So equal emphasis must be placed upon the survival of deferential attitudes within Lyonnais society itself.

Workers

The pattern of working class support for the Federation is broadly similar to that of the white collar workers. Federation workers are older than those in the electorate in general, but in terms of birthplace they are broadly similar to the electorate. Many Federation workers had migrated to Lyon from small rural communes. But many others were of Lyonnais origin. This takes on a particular significance in suburban communes like Vénissieux, where electoral lists obscure the massive presence of foreign immigrants. In such communes Federation members were an isolated Lyonnais minority. This lends significance to the circulation of the popular racist weekly *Lyon passe-partout* in the suburbs.¹²⁰ On the other hand, it is likely that all parties recruited their militants from among the locally born.

¹¹⁸ Kolboom, 'Les cadres', p. 72.

¹¹⁹ 62% of PDP employees were born in the agglomeration compared to 43% of those in the Federation.

¹²⁰ Videlier, op. cit., pp. 176-7. Immigrants comprised 44% of the population in 1931.

The Peasantry

It is difficult to learn much about the nature of peasant support for the Federation from the sources used. Electoral lists usually describe all those engaged in agricultural pursuits as 'cultivateurs'. Most often the only additional information is whether or not the individual concerned was a 'patron'. This is all that is known of 63% of those in the sample.¹²¹ 'Patrons', are, however, almost certainly overrepresented in relation to the electorate at large, which suggests that political activity was reserved for heads of households.

Proprietors (19%) are of far greater importance than tenants (1%). Because the conservative vote was often very high in areas where tenants were most numerous, this may simply mean that the Federation had no need of active support of any kind in such communes. Or it may mean that tenants, for reasons of prestige, were less likely to advertise their status in the census. But the difference is so large that it must be concluded that ownership of property was a condition of notability and involvement in rural politics. Winegrowers are also rare in the Federation sample. This is again due in part to the imprecision of the sources.

We have no indication of the sizes of farms owned by Federation sympathisers. The right in rural areas was led by substantial landowners. The most prominent were Alexandre Bosse-Platière, the Comte Guy de Saint-Laumer of Corcelles (Beaujeu) and the Comte Vivien de Lescure, *Conseiller général* of St Laurent. Such men were often prominent in agricultural syndicates and *comices*. But by far the bulk of Federation sympathisers were medium to large peasant proprietors. The example of Jean Parrel in Messimy has been referred to on several occasions. Another example is the Badoil family of Yzeron. Four family members turn up in the sample, of which one was mayor of the commune.

Conclusion

To sum up, the Federation was in the 1930s less and less the instrument of liberal bankers and factory owners like Edouard Aynard. Its militant base was no longer of be found on the plateau or in the Brotteaux, but from Perrache to the Croix Rousse in Lyon, and in small rural communes in the mountains and the Beaujolais. These were areas where representatives of a declining elites were influential: aristocratic large landowners, excluded from the USE; commercial and merchant-manufacturing elites, especially in the silk industry. Their influence depended on religion, typically exercised either over the passive peasantry of the mountains, or the deferential white collar workers of the Croix Rousse. Whereas the leaders of the Federation were bourgeois and most often Lyonnais, the mass of sympathisers were white collar workers or peasants. Most of the former lived in their commune of birth, while many of the latter

¹²¹ 41% were 'cultivateurs' and 'patrons'; 22% were 'cultivateurs' alone.

had been born in small rural communes, perhaps situated in areas of high religious practice. The contrast between older supporters in which the Lyon-born were overrepresented and a younger generation in which rural migrants were relatively more common is indicative of reliance upon religious ties. Many of the latter were recruited from working class suburbs, and do not seem to have become deeply involved in party activities. That Federation militants were older than those in rival parties, and increasingly so, is illustrative of crisis.

As the Federation shifted to the right certain of its former leaders turned to the lay centre right, which began to challenge the Federation in the Brotteaux. Here they met with businessmen and senior managers for whom anti-clericalism and reformism went together. In the 3rd and 5th arrondissements the Federation was challenged by the PDP. The latter was largely the political prolongation of the social Catholic movement, which drew support from young urbanized white collar workers.

Chapter six

Notables, mass parties and the Church

In this chapter we shall see how in the late 1920s and early 1930s the elitist *Fédération républicaine* of liberal notables like Edouard Aynard and August Isaac was reorganized by Victor Perret. Institutional change cannot, however, be isolated from a broader crisis of bourgeois society. Perret's target was the Aynardian political and economic elite. His stated intention was to mobilize a popular and national opposition against what he saw as 'la bourgeoisie en place', through a renovation of the structures of the Federation. This was a programme which in some respects resembled that of the radical right in its appeal to a 'national opposition'. But Perret's reconstructed Federation was itself dominated, as we have seen, by elitist Catholic landowners and bourgeois who sought to contain social and economic change. In the countryside the Federation merely formalized the ties of notables to the party. In Lyon the parishes were the means by which a mass following was integrated. There were contacts between the Federation and leagues like the *Jeunesses patriotes*, but Perret sought to ensure that the latter remained subordinate.

All the same, the radicalization of the Federation helped to prepare the way for the reappearance of the extreme right in the mid-1930s. Another result of Perret's efforts was institutionalization of intra-conservative conflict. Those who resented Perret's authoritarianism or social policies often turned towards the loose groupings of the lay centre right. Others saw in the PDP a genuinely democratic party committed to social reform.

Notables

Invocation of the influence of 'notables' upon political behaviour in France is often a substitute for serious analysis. It appears possible to cut through the tangle of regional, class and religious loyalties by putting everything down to 'personalities'. But carefully defined, the concept of 'notable politics' is a useful one. It can be taken to signify two things. It can mean that an individual, perhaps a Catholic landowner, is accepted as a leader because of who he is rather than because of his policies. Alternatively, a notable could be a deputy who makes use of state patronage in order to build a position which depends upon services rendered rather than ideology. The history of the early Third Republic is often written in terms of the replacement of the first kind of notable by the second. As long as this is related to social and ideological context it is a plausible view.

It is not difficult to see the extent to which Radical influence in the Rhône depended upon state patronage. In *Clochemerle*, the position of Radical Senator

Barthélemy Piéchut depends on careful cultivation of personal networks. In spite of his anti-clericalism he marries his daughter to an impoverished aristocrat, which put him in a position 'd'arbitrer tous les petits conflits, entre le Saône et les Monts d'Azergues', and permitted him to combine the advantages of old and new notables.¹ No doubt Chevallier had in mind Radical politicians such as Senator Camille Rolland, who was able to use his position as a doctor to create a network of sympathies even in the Catholic canton of St Symphorian.² In Lyon politics were dominated by ex-Prime Minister Edouard Herriot. Mayor of Lyon for fifty years, and from 1937 a *conseiller général*, Herriot is a classic example of how accumulation of mandates could bring the power of Paris to the provinces.³

The use of patronage was also open to the centre right. Laurent Bonnevey, Deputy for Tarare, was able to exploit the pivotal position of the centre right in parliament. Even the moderate wing of the Federation, represented by François Peissel, had access to government favour.⁴ It was for these reasons that conservative pressure groups like the USE and the Chamber of Commerce tended to work with the moderate right. This is also why the moderate right, tended to distrust mass organization, which would have tied its hands. The route to power both for the Federation of Aynard and Isaac and for the lay centre right in the interwar years was through personal influence. The style of Auguste Isaac, which one commentator described as that of an English 'milord', was a radically different from that of Victor Perret.⁵

During the period when his friend Louis Marin was Minister of Pensions (1926-1928), Perret made full use of the advantages this opened up. He reassured Marin that he only passed on those requests for assistance which were either 'justifiable' or which possessed 'vraiment un intérêt direct pour des amis fidèles et dévoués, ce qui est le cas aujourd'hui'.⁶ The problem, however, was that the Federa-

1 Chevallier, op. cit., pp.408-9.

2 Gric, op. cit., p. 198. Camille Rolland's home commune of Brignais had been poised between left and right until in 1929 he was elected to the Senate. In 1935 the right constituted a list for the municipal elections only with great difficulty. A report of 1941 concluded that 'la population étant en forte majorité agricole, la frontière entre ces deux partis politiques n'était pas très marquée. Ces questions de personnes et d'intérêts locaux, jouent un grand rôle dans les élections locales (ADR 4m *Conseils municipaux*, dossier Brignais).

3 The mayor of Lyon enjoyed close relations with a succession of prefects. Emile Bollaert, named to the Rhône in February 1934 by a government of which Herriot was a member, had previously been *chef de cabinet* in Herriot's 1932 administration, and would go on to be a Radical deputy after the war. An astonishing confirmation of Herriot's popularity came in 1931. In order to free himself from dependence in the municipal council on the malevolent neutrality of the SFIO, Herriot resigned and presented himself for election in the Socialist stronghold of the 3rd arrondissement. The socialists were crushed. (Berstein, op. cit., pp. 179-181).

4 AN F/ 13 261: during the campaign for the 1932 election the prefect commented 'La bonhomie souriante de M. Peissel, les démarches qu'il n'a jamais ménagées, lui assureront un succès qui semble peu douteux'. Jean-Baptiste Delorme too stressed to the electors his role in bringing water and electricity to the countryside. *Le Nouvelliste*, 5-1-1932.

5 Gric, op. cit., p. 60.

6 Marin Papers 76, Perret to Marin, 16-2-1928 and 21-2-1928, 30-8-1927. On another occasion Perret wrote to Marin to ask him to prevent the transfer of a tax collector's office from a commune adjacent to St Vincent de Reins (Lamure), where Perret had a summer residence, to Cours: ce serait d'un poids énorme pour nos idées et pour nous-mêmes, d'autant plus que ce percepteur et de nos amis'. Success would be all the more savoured, Perret continued, because the affair concerned Laurent Bonnevey's constituency. Neither was Perret above lobbying on his own behalf—he wrote to both Louis Marin and Minister of Commerce Georges Bonnefous to complain that the latter had not awarded him the Legion of Honour. Carton 76, Perret to Marin 20-8-1929, Perret to Bonnafous, 19-8-1929.

tion was rarely in government. Perret's followers had to be content with exploiting local notoriety. Thus in the legislative election of 1932 the *conseiller général* Alexandre Bosse-Platière gained 42% of the vote in his own commune of Lucenay, compared to 16% in the constituency as a whole.

Victor Perret could also depend on the support of an older kind of notable. In the mountains and in parts of the Beaujolais some conservatives were elected because of who they were, as much as because of their politics. The family of the Marquis de Gayardon de Fenoyl, for example, occupied the mayoralty of St Foy l'Argentière for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Comte de Lescure, *conseiller général* for the canton of St Laurent de Chamousset was personally affronted when a Radical list defeated him in municipal elections in Chambost-Longessaigne in 1935.⁷

Paternalist relationships were buttressed by the Church. In the Beaujolais Guy de Saint-Laumer operated a *Clochemerle* style alliance with the clergy. The mountain commune of Montromand was administered for many years by the local priest, who occupied the position of secretary to absentee mayor Alexandre La Batie. A prefectoral survey of the political situation recorded concern that the secretary-priest had threatened to close cafés which opened during mass.⁸ As well as the Church, landowners relied on prosperous peasant mayors for their influence upon the wider electorate. A campaign meeting for the 1928 election at St Symphorian market was described by the press as 'a veritable plenary assembly of mayors'.⁹

But we have seen in previous chapters that notables could no longer rely automatically on deference. Indeed, it is possible to speak of a general crisis of notable politics in the 1930s, stretching beyond the right into the Radical Party. This became manifest in the elections of 1936, when Herriot was deeply wounded by failure to win on the first ballot.¹⁰ Meanwhile Laurent Bonnevey saw two fifths of his 1932 vote desert to Victor Perret. Bonnevey prevailed only with Radical support. There were ideological limits beyond which even Herriot and Bonnevey could not go. The former had alienated his electorate by his support for deflation; the latter by his flirtation with the Popular Front. Even before these crisis years, notability had never been sufficient. Julien Riboud's investiture by eight of the canton of Monsols's eleven mayors was insufficient to prevent ignominious defeat in the *cantoniales* of 1934. Victor Perret failed to build a position in the commune of St Bonnet le Troncy, even though he owned a summer residence there and was an employer of local weavers.¹¹

⁷ ADR 4m *conseils municipaux*, dossier St Laurent de Chamousset. In Bully, a plateau commune, the Gillets had an unshakable grip on the municipal council. Edmond Gillet was succeeded as mayor in 1931 by Bizot, a relative through marriage who spent most of his time in Paris. (ADR 4m *conseils municipaux*, dossier l'Arbresle).

⁸ ADR 4m, *conseils municipaux*, dossier St Laurent de Chamousset, report of 9-5-1941. *L'Union républicaine*, 30-4-1933. In Duerne (St Symphorian) mayor Villard was criticized for excessive subservience to the *curé* and the clerical party. (ADR 4m, *conseils municipaux*, dossier St Symphorian sur Coise, report of November 1940).

⁹ *Le Nouveau Journal*, 15-4-1932.

¹⁰ M. Soulié, *La vie politique d'Edouard Herriot*, Paris, 1962.

¹¹ He secured election to the municipal council in 1925—the only mandate he ever held—but was ousted five years later.

Victor Perret's reorganization of the Federation must be seen in the context of this crisis. Deference to the 'traditional authorities' could not be counted upon outside of certain areas, and was not certain even there. Perret's extremism meanwhile closed off the possibility of using government patronage, which was available only to the Radicals and to the despised moderate right.

The Fédération républicaine

In the 1930s the *Fédération républicaine du Rhône* became, in the words of William Irvine, the 'organizational showpiece of the party'.¹² This transformation was substantially the work of Victor Perret. Aged forty-seven in 1930, he was the son of a *fabricant de soieries* and leading figure in the ALP.¹³ Whether Perret junior was ever a member of the ALP is unknown. But what is certain is that after service in the artillery during the war he was attracted by the intransigent nationalism of Louis Marin.¹⁴

Victor Perret was held up as an example to Federation members in France as a whole: 'sa popularité méritée est due, pour une large part, au fait qu'il reste et restera toujours le prototype de militant, mettant ses forces et son travail, avec un désintéressement total, au service de ses idées'.¹⁵ Thanks to his unceasing activism Perret rose rapidly in the party hierarchy, struggling for ascendancy with François Peissel, President in the Rhône from 1925.¹⁶ On the latter's election as deputy in 1928 Perret took on the position of 'active president', and became President in his own right in December 1931. In mid-1932, after a crisis provoked by the refusal of Peissel and his ally Antoine Sallès to sit with the Federation's group in the Chamber of Deputies, Perret's control over the Federation became absolute. In the summer of the previous year he had become a member of the national Executive Committee. Given that he never held a significant electoral mandate, Perret's rise to a position where he was a minor player on the national scene is remarkable in a party of *élues* like the Federation.

Doubtless Perret's preoccupation with organization was derived from family involvement in the ALP.¹⁷ Bosse-Platière was another with roots in the party of De Mun and Piou. The ALP itself, had survived in the Rhône until 1929, when, under the influence of its most reactionary members, it was dissolved into the short-lived *Ligue des droits de la nation*. The ALP had sent fifty delegates to the congress of 1928 which chose Peissel as the conservative candidate in the constituency of l'Arbresle.

¹² Irvine, op. cit., pp. 39-41.

¹³ Perret had been a member of the Federation committee of the 4th arrondissement since its foundation in 1910.

¹⁴ On Louis Marin see Irvine op. cit., pp. 6-12.

¹⁵ Marin papers 78, cutting from *La Nation*.

An article in *l'Union Républicaine* describes him thus: 'De taille moyenne, large d'épaules, donnant une extraordinaire impression de force et de vitalité, M. Perret a le physique de lutteur. Il en a aussi l'âme.'

¹⁶ Marin Papers 82, Perret to Marin, 28-2-1924: Perret already boasts of his success in propagating the party faith.

¹⁷ On the organization of the ALP see B.F. Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Republic*, North Carolina, 1978, pp. 161-2. See also infra. Chapter two.

But after this date it is impossible to distinguish ALP militants in the countryside from sympathizers of the FR. There was a similarity in the structure of the two parties: leaders drawn from the Catholic elites mobilized a popular following through an alliance with the Church.

Victor Perret's aims were made clear at a meeting of the National Council of the Federation in September 1929. He attributed disquiet in the party to 'des parlementaires qui viennent sans cesse donner leur opinion à laquelle ni personne, ni la presse ne contredit'. Going on to speak of 'national recovery', he argued, 'si on ne peut pas le faire avec la bourgeoisie, et particulièrement la bourgeoisie en place, il faudra avec des éléments populaires'.¹⁸ On another occasion he argued that 'les directions de trois ou quatre hommes ont vécu. Ce sont ceux qui se dévouent qui doivent diriger'.¹⁹ In the Lyonnais context this meant the mobilization of the people against an unrepresentative clique.

How successful was Victor Perret? In electoral terms he had a negative impact on the Federation, for his turn to the right was a major cause of the rise of the centre right. Perret himself recognized that he was an electoral liability, withdrawing his candidacy for the 1935 Senate elections in order to make the Federation list more attractive to centrists.²⁰ In sociological terms we have seen that the Federation recruited more widely than its rivals. But the ruling classes were overrepresented; leadership was increasingly dominated by 'old bourgeois' and landowners, while the party's mass base was unstable and passive.

In organizational terms too the results of Perret's activities were mixed. There was a complex network of organizations. At the summit of the Federation was a bureau of about twenty-five persons, elected by secret ballot from the 100 member *Conseil départemental*. Below this was a 500 member *Comité départemental* which rarely met. The base was made up of committees, theoretically present in all communes and cantons of the department, as well as in each of the municipal arrondissements of Lyon. The seven committees of Lyon also sent delegates to a central committee. Dependent organizations, included a *Comité d'ouvriers et employés*, a *Groupe des jeunes*, several social centres, two groups dedicated to providing the children of the under-privileged with holidays,²¹ a *boules* federation, *Solidarité scolaire* which sup-

18 Marin Papers 84, 'resumé of Perret's intervention'.

19 *L'Union républicaine*, 9-2-1936. In Villefranche Alexandre Bosse-Platière publicly attacked domination of the Federation by deputies who too readily attributed their success to the cleverness of their campaigns, the astuteness of their manoeuvres, and the services they had rendered. Like Perret he added an anti-bourgeois note, denouncing 'une certaine élite qui vit sur elle-même. Sans être des aristocrates ses membres ne mêlent pas au vrai peuple. Ils se voient, se reçoivent, fréquentant toujours les gens du même condition sociale. [...] Ils ont pour nous, les militants, une certaine pitié dédaigneuse'. (*L'Union Républicaine*, 11-9-1932, 7-1-1934, 12-5-1935).

20 317 AP 76, Perret to Marin, 22-8-1935.

21 The *Tutélaire du premier arrondissement*, and the *Oeuvre des enfants à la montagne* in the 2nd arrondissement.

ported private schools in the 2nd arrondissement, and two small concerns which provided cheap housing.²²

Table 12. Committees of the <i>Fédération républicaine</i>	
Committee	Date of Formation
1st arrdt.	?1905
2nd arrdt.	1893
3rd arrdt.	?
4th arrdt.	1910
5th arrdt.	1928
6th arrdt.	1930
7th arrdt.	1930
Villeurbanne	1926
Vénissieux	1928
La Mulatière	1930
St Fons	1934
Villefranche	1932
Tarare	1936

Perret's part in all this was impressive. As Table 12 demonstrates, his presidency saw the extension of the Federation's organization from the *presqu'île* and Croix Rousse to the left bank of the Rhône, to working class suburbs and to Villefranche and Tarare. It was seen in the previous chapter that membership of the Federation rose quite substantially in the early 1930s. If the labels adopted by candidates during legislative elections are taken as an indicator, then Perret had some success in disciplining the right. In 1936, if Peissel and Sallès are counted as adherents of the Federation, it was for the first time present in all fourteen constituencies in the Rhône. And for the first time a true party man, in the person of Pierre Burgeot in the 6th arrondissement, was victorious.²³

Perret's impact upon the Federation is beyond dispute. Yet his success was incomplete. In the first place, tightening of party structures contributed to intensification of conflict with rival strands in the right. In Lyon's 'red belt' the FR organized on virgin territory. In the 5th, 6th and 7th arrondissements, and in Villefranche and Tarare, new FR committees were set up alongside older conservative organizations which had shown few signs of life outside of electoral periods, and which were supposed to federate all republicans.²⁴ Conflict was most serious in the 6th arrondisse-

22 The *Cités jardins de la Fédération républicaine* provided twenty lots in the 5th arrondissement. There was also the *Société coopérative de construction* in Villeurbanne.

23 *L'Union républicaine*, 28-6-1936. Burgeot was by all accounts a rather colourless character, entirely loyal to Victor Perret. He was, according to a police report, selected as candidate only because no one else came forward. *ADR Elections législatives*, 1936, 22-2-1936.

24 The new committee of the Federation in the 7th was 'en remplacement de l'Union des comités, organisme purement électoral et qui n'a au 7^e arrondissement de raison d'être qu'en période électorale'. *Le Nouveau journal*, 2-12-1930.

ment, where all tendencies had hitherto been federated in the *Union des comités républicains*.

Within the Federation too there was much resistance to the imposition of discipline.²⁵ Committees were not the democratic structures of party propaganda.²⁶ On the contrary, Perret's rise in the Federation was accompanied by increasing authoritarianism. Elections to bureaux of committees were never contested. With the purchase of the *Nouveau journal* by the *Nouvelliste* in 1931 conflict within the Federation was no longer reported by the conservative press. *Union républicaine* did its best to gloss over conflict.²⁷

Authoritarianism was one of the reasons for the departure of Laurent Bonnevey from the Federation. He contrasted Perret, with his 'esprit de la petite chapelle, [et son] autocratie de direction', with the tolerance of Edouard Aynard.²⁸ Bonnevey's views had much to do with the need to safeguard a patiently constructed client network. Perret for his part included a 'struggle against organized parties' among his principal grievances against the Deputy of Tarare.²⁹ In 1932 the refusal of Sallès and Peissel to join the Federation's parliamentary group prompted another controversy over party discipline. Their action provoked a diatribe from Bosse-Platière against the egoism of deputies who believed themselves to have been elected through their own efforts.³⁰

The outcome of this crisis, however, illustrates the limits of Perret's reach. The *bureau départemental* decided unanimously, with the backing of the four *conseillers généraux* of Peissel's constituency, to suspend all activity with the renegades until they returned to the fold. It was strongly hinted that there would be no backing for Sallès and Peissel in the elections of 1936. These sanctions had no practical effect. They were not announced to the public. Both deputies continued to attend Federation meetings.³¹

The relative helplessness of the Federation when confronted with a Bonnevey, Peissel or Sallès, is reflected in the implantation of its committees. The party claimed in 1929 to have committees in all thirty-three cantons in the department, as well as in 150 of its 269 communes.³² Yet the press mentions the existence of no more than thirty-six committees outside the commune of Lyon from 1928 to May 1936, of

25 Marin papers 76, manuscript of an article for insertion in *La Nation*. In 1926 the pages of this usually dull periodical had been enlivened by a polemic between Louis Marin and Laurent Bonnevey. One of the latter's grievances was the attempt of Marin, and by implication Perret, to discipline the party: 'Aujourd'hui il paraît qu'on veut unifier ce parti et même la fédération qui n'est pas un parti. On édicte une doctrine! On vous encercle dans un programme! Sur toute matière on apporte des dogmes. Et pas une question n'apparaît qui ne recouvre immédiatement des solutions impératives. On est prêt à reprendre les formules du Syllabus [...]'.
26 *L'Union républicaine*, 9-2-1936.

27 *L'Union républicaine*, October 1932: Constant Bonnard resigned from the bureau of the 4th committee in 1934, citing differences over means, not ends.

28 *L'Union républicaine*, 6-1-1935.

29 *L'Union républicaine*, 23-12-1934.

30 See footnote 19.

31 AN 317 AP 80, Perret to Marin, 10-6-1932.

32 *Le Nouvelliste*, 19-3-1929.

which five were cantonal committees. Of these only a handful showed any sign of life in five or more years: those in the seven arrondissements of Lyon, Villeurbanne, Vénissieux and Oullins in the agglomeration, and the cantonal committees of Condrieu and Neuville sur Saône. From Maps and 6.1 and 6.2 it can be seen that Perret's organizational efforts had little impact beyond the *grande banlieu* of Lyon. Committees in rural communes were exceptional. These were often animated by individuals with links to the agglomeration.³³

In reality Perret's Federation consisted of a sort of cartel which included notables in the Beaujolais, the mountains and the 2nd arrondissement of Lyon, together with Perret's own network of committees.

We saw in the previous chapter that Perret's rise in the Federation was associated with a shift towards the mountains and Beaujolais. But this was not accompanied by a similar spread of the organized Federation to these areas. Landowners like Alexandre La Batie and Guy de Saint-Laumer wrote in the Federation press and participated in its ruling circles. But they did not set up permanent party committees. Public activity was limited to the odd public meeting in the cantonal *chef-lieu*. These were run on strictly hierarchical lines. In a meeting at St. Laurent in 1933 the village *curé* sat on the platform alongside La Batie and all of the canton's mayors.³⁴ In other words the spread of the Federation to the mountains and the Beaujolais involved the formalisation of established relationships at a time when they were coming under threat.

In Lyon too a modified form of notable politics survived in some areas. We shall see that notable politics remained the norm in the centre right. Of more relevance to our present purpose is that the committee of the 2nd arrondissement remained independent of the Federation. Desire to maintain distance from Perret was partly due to the fact that this was the only part of the city where the right consistently won elections. Consequently *élus* like Antoine Sallès were dominant. Monthly meetings consisted accounts of the general political situation, usually delivered by Sallès, followed by speeches from members of municipal and local councils on matters such as the circulation of traffic. Furthermore, in a constituency which had remained marginal into the mid-1920s, Antoine Sallès attempted to maintain an above party image.³⁵ In fact, most committee members were sympathizers of Victor Perret, as would be expected in an area where the 'old bourgeoisie' were well represented.³⁶ In the longer term, especially after the *Croix de Feu* and PSF directly challenged the

³³ See Chapter five.

³⁴ *L'Union républicaine*, 30-4-1933.

³⁵ For this reason Sallès joined Peissel in refusing to join the Federation group in the Chamber in 1932, even though his views were well to the right of those of Peissel.

³⁶ Interview with Monsieur H.C., February 1987. Even Johannes Mercier, a member of the Alliance and municipal councillor, was a firm supporter of Perret.

Committees of the Federation
1928 to 1931



- Legend
- ▲ Active 1–2 years
 - ★ Active 3–4 years

Map 6.1

Committees of the Federation
1932 to June 1936



- Legend
- ▲ Active 1–2 years
 - ★ Active 3–4 years

Map 6.2

Federation, the committee of the 2nd arrondissement allied itself ever more explicitly with Perret.

On the plateau meanwhile Perret's wing of the Federation was less influential. François Peissel remained in charge. Deference was the rule here too, but it depended less on allegiance to traditional authorities than upon the conservatism of satisfied and prosperous peasants, skilfully maintained by François Peissel's patronage. His candidacy was automatically renewed in 1932 and 1936 by assemblies of communal delegates, most of whom were either mayors or their deputies.³⁷ Yet on the plateau even more than in the mountains, deference had its limits. One of the few Federation committees on the plateau was led by Jean-Marie Parrel, a figure with close links to the JAC. Parrel was loyal to Victor Perret, but many younger *jacistes* were to turn to the *Croix de Feu*.

The role of the elites

The purpose of this and the following section is to look more closely at the distribution of power within the Federation. We saw in the previous chapter that those with authority were much more likely to be drawn from the ruling class. Neither peasant mayors, nor working class adherents in Vénissieux were able to penetrate the leadership of the Federation. We have seen that certain types of businessmen were very favourable to the Federation. But does this mean that they were able to determine its actions?

Victor Perret's correspondence with Marin shows that he regarded income from business as essential. The Federation's accounts for the 1936 elections show that Perret received money from two national sources. Some came from the notorious *Union des intérêts économiques* (UIE), an organization sponsored by the *Comité des forges* and other rather conservative businessmen. On the first round the deputies Sallès and Peissel, (now back in the Federation fold), received 10,000 francs each, while Perret himself, the only other beneficiary, got 5,000 to assist in his fight against Bonnevey. Business money was forthcoming only where a candidate was sufficiently right wing, and where he stood a chance of winning. It was not distributed indiscriminately, as is sometimes claimed.

The second source was the Federation in Paris, which gave an equal sum to the same three candidates on the first ballot. For the second ballot the UIE gave nothing at all. But the Federation found a further 5,000 for three particularly important campaigns. It is interesting that Pierre Burgeot, who won the 6th arrondissement from the Radicals, received money only on the second round—few had expected him to survive the first ballot.³⁸

³⁷ *Nouveau Journal*, 7-3-1932: 366 delegates at l'Arbresle were mandated by 69 communes (*L'Union républicaine*, 6-3-1936).

³⁸ AN 317 AP 81.

Most Federation candidates were reliant on donations from local business, channelled through the Federation. For example Perret received 25,000 francs from an unnamed donor to fight the Senate elections of 1926.³⁹ From the sparse evidence available it appears that local banking circles were the chief source of money. The national Budget Commission of the Federation included two sons of Edouard Aynard together with Oscar Cambefort, all of whom were members of the board of the Aynard family bank.⁴⁰

The Federation's financiers were not afraid to use their influence. In 1929 Auguste Isaac, who was close to the bankers cited above, warned Jean Guiter⁴¹ that the Federation would regret its lack of regard [sic] for the public finances when next it asked for funds.⁴² Such pressure was sometimes successful. In the summer of 1935 Perret was taken to task (in private) by Isaac for an article he had written in the *Union républicaine*, in which he had detected a rather improbable conspiracy of oil companies, banks and insurance companies against the Federation. Isaac demanded an explanation for sentiments more usually associated with communists.⁴³ Perret was clearly worried by the letter, for he informed Louis Marin that Isaac still had considerable influence in Lyonnais financial circles ('sur la place de Lyon') We went on to inform his leader that

Il est certain que je n'ose pas dire ce que je pense des "banques" - car si elles m'abandonnaient à Lyon - que deviendrais je??? [sic] Quel malheur de ne pas être riche et indépendant complètement.⁴⁴

It is difficult to know whether Perret was referring to the independence of the Federation or to personal difficulties with the banks, for since 1931 Perret's own business had been in a precarious position. In October of that year he had offered to take on the task of liaising between the Federation and its departmental sections during the forthcoming elections in return for a subsidy which would help him get through the recession with his dignity intact. Revealingly, he goes on to say

Je ne veux rien demander ici, car je sais d'avance le prix qu'on me ferait payer le moindre appui et j'aime mieux vendre ma chemise que céder un pouce de terrain et d'une idée.⁴⁵

What is clear is that money was not given without strings, and that Perret was conscious of limits beyond which he could not go. He did not repeat his 1935 attack on the banks. A party like the Federation did not have the autonomy from the elites which would have derived from possession of a genuine mass membership.

³⁹ 317 AP 76, Perret to Marin 23-10-1926.

⁴⁰ 317 AP 75.

⁴¹ National secretary of the Federation.

⁴² 317 AP 73, dossier Young Plan.

⁴³ 317 AP 76, (there are two cartons with this number, whatever the archivists might say), Isaac to Perret, 18-8-1935. *L'Union républicaine*, 18-8-1935.

⁴⁴ 317 AP 76 (second carton), Perret to Marin, 22-8-35.

⁴⁵ 317 AP 76, 16-7-1931. In 1933 an illegible correspondent of Marin reports that one of his relatives would soon be obliged to withdraw certain financial guarantees from Perret's firm. He asks if the Federation can do anything.

All the same the position of big business was not the same as it had been in the days when liberal businessmen like Aynard, Isaac and Jean Coignet had combined leadership of the Chamber of Commerce with leadership of the Federation and parliamentary careers. We saw in Chapter five that elite businessmen like Gillet and Isaac played a declining role in the party. Relations between the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation also became more distant from the late 1920s. It would appear that by the early 1930s financial pressure was the only way in which the liberal elite could influence the Federation. Out of sympathy with the political ideas of Victor Perret, big business turned instead to the moderate right and even conservative Radicals to lobby on their behalf. The attitude of Henry Morel-Journal is symbolic of the changing relationship between big business and politics in Lyon. He still regarded the step from Chamber to politics as a natural. Before he became President he had written pessimistically in his diary, 'Avec ma position et mes facultés, j'aurais pu avoir des visées plus hautes, me «mettre en avant» pour la présidence de la Chambre de Commerce (qui est à portée de ma main), puis faire de la politique etc. ...'. Although Morel-Journal did subsequently become President of the Chamber, he did not move into politics.⁴⁶

Just as the days when politics had been the preserve of a narrow elite of business politicians had gone, so conservative organization could no longer be seen as an outgrowth of elite sociability. Before World War One what were known in Britain as gentlemen's clubs had played a central role in the sociability of the Lyonnais elites. There had been a marked difference in the geography, sociology and political atmosphere of the main *cercles*.⁴⁷ Broadly speaking the clientele of the *Cercle de l'union* corresponded to the leadership of the Federation, while the *Cercle de Commerce* was closer to the Radicals and lay centre right. It is, moreover, possible to see *some* personal links with those parties.⁴⁸ In the 1930s twelve Federation militants were members of the *Cercle de l'Union*, against only three who were members of the *Cercle de Commerce*. One of the latter, Jean Coignet, had doubtless joined in the days when it had been the Federation which had grouped the progressive bourgeoisie.

But what is most striking is that so few Federation activists spent their evenings at either *cercle*. Those who did so were often an older generation of business politicians like Isaac—those who had collaborated with Aynard. Henry Morel-Journal reveals that he attended a weekly 'economists lunch' at the *Cercle de l'union*, where he met such figures as Auguste and Humbert Isaac, Jean Coignet, Edmond Gillet and Oscar Cambeforte. Business and politics were the staple conversation.⁴⁹

46 *Journal d'Henry Morel-Journal*, 11-11-1932.

47 On *cercles* see J.-L. Pinol, *Mobilités et immobilismes*, pp. 225-264.

48 Our source is the *Annuaire de Tout-Lyon*.

49 *Journal d'Henry Morel-Journal*, 16-6-1929, 2-7-1930.

But none of the leading figures in the Federation in the 1930s were members of either *cercle*, not even Victor Perret himself.⁵⁰

Only in the case of the 2nd *arrondissement* can this conclusion be qualified, for deputy Sallès along with two leading committee members were adherents of the *Cercle de l'Union*. This is another confirmation that in this area politics remained the preserve of the 'old bourgeoisie' of merchants and lawyers.

In the 1930s it was rentiers, lawyers and owners of largeish but often old-fashioned family firms, like that of Victor Perret himself, which dominated the Federation. The latter were excluded from influence in the Chamber of commerce, and were not quite wealthy enough to join the *Cercle de l'Union*. Rather their social life centred on the parish, which was also the chief field of their political action and their means of mobilizing a mass following.

The Federation and the conservative masses

An article in *l'Union républicaine* in 1932 by Jean Deschanet describes the party-run social centres of the SFIO and Radical propaganda in local cafés. We, Deschanet lamented, have the reputation of frequenting cafés only in electoral periods. He proposed that committees should organize 'aperitifs dominicaux' in cafés.⁵¹ The bourgeois and patriarchal nature of his solution is plain. It was supposed to take advantage of a time when 'Le dimanche matin, notamment pendant que la bourgeoisie se livre autour de son fourneau, de son réchaud, à de savantes préparations culinaires, son homme, souvent flanqué d'un ou deux rejets turbulents, s'en va lire son journal en présence d'un mandarin-citron ou retrouver des copains à tel café, dont il est l'habitué'. In the days of Edouard Aynard lack of contact with the masses would not have been regarded as a problem. What is interesting here is that even in Perret's Federation there was no real attempt to propagandize directly the wider public. Rather Victor Perret attempted to create a mass party by strengthening links with the Church.

Of course, the Catholic hierarchy did not descend into the arena of *party* politics. All the same, Catholics could have been in little doubt as to Maurin's views on how they should vote. His pastoral letter for the 1932 elections urged Catholics to vote for those who were prepared to help the Church re-conquer its lost rights.⁵² Since both the *Alliance démocratique* and the PDP were inclined to accept the status quo, Maurin could only be advising a vote for the Federation. In case his meaning was unclear, he went on to remind Catholics that without the Church the temporal power could not see clearly, and was incapable of barring the road to disorder.⁵³

⁵⁰ Perret did belong to the *Auto Club de Rhône*, but this new institution cannot be linked to a political tendency.

⁵¹ *L'Union républicaine*, 10-7-1932, 3-7-1932. Only in the 6th *arrondissement* was the idea taken up.

⁵² 'Les électeurs auront bientôt, en France, à choisir leurs représentants. Nous leur rappelons instamment qu'il est obligatoire pour eux dans la mesure où ils peuvent, d'envoyer au parlement des hommes qui non seulement ne porteront aucun préjudice à la religion, mais qui s'emploieront à reconquérir, avec prudence sans doute, mais aussi avec fermeté, les droits et les libertés qu'on nous a injustement ravies.'

⁵³ *Le Nouvelliste*, 25-1-1932.

Further than this the hierarchy did not go. But there is much evidence of personal ties between Church and Federation. Victor Perret himself was deeply religious; his brother was an *abbé* in the parish of St François de Sales; another militant in the seventh arrondissement, Louis Chassagnon, was brother of the bishop of Autun. Several sympathizers received papal decorations for their activity on behalf of the Church.⁵⁴ It is true that few of the most senior laity were involved in the Federation.⁵⁵ Many of the latter remained crypto-royalist and integrist in their sympathies. But politically impotent, they provided tacit support for the Federation. Furthermore, at the same time as the Federation moved to the right the hierarchy was in the process of renewing its mode of intervention in the secular world.

This can be seen in the links between the Federation and the *Oeuvre des cercles*.⁵⁶ According to Claudius Dériol, interviewed in 1987, its parish groups were an essential source of recruits for the party. He also stated that the parish clergy were generally favourable to the Federation.⁵⁷ Federation municipal councillors such as Charles Bennier and Paul Montrochet in the 2nd arrondissement patronized the *cercles*. Relations between party and *cercles* were especially close, Dériol suggests, in the 4th arrondissement, where Victor Perret himself was Vice-president of the *Cercle paroissiale* of St Bruno—the President was a cousin of his. Jean Michoud, president of the *Cercle St Augustine* attended several meetings of the FR committee in the Croix Rousse in the late 1920s and early 1930s.⁵⁸ For the average *cercle* member, the main points of contact with the Federation were *belotte* and *boules* tournaments organized by the latter.⁵⁹

These contacts reveal much about the changing nature of the Federation. The circles were the offspring of De Mun's *Oeuvre des cercles ouvriers*, founded in 1872. In 1908, in recognition of a limited proletarian participation, the reference to workers was quietly dropped. In the years before WW1 the *Oeuvre des cercles* had vegetated; there were in 1908 no more than about 20 circles, grouping around 600 men.⁶⁰ After

54 For example, Victor Bérard and M. Plasson, both of the 7th arrondissement, received respectively the Order of St Gregory the Great and the *Croix pro ecclesia et pontifice*. The secretary of the seventh committee said 'plusieurs entre nous s'occupent de la manière la plus active d'oeuvres diverses, paroissiales, sociales mutualistes, etc. [...]'

55 One exception is the Comte de la Sparre, a Beaujolais winegrower and doyen of the *Faculté catholique*.

56 Various known as *cercles d'hommes*, *groupes d'hommes*, or *cercles paroissiales*.

57 Interview with Claudius Dériol, 16-8-1987. M. Dériol is a former journalist, who was active in the PDP, the *Chronique*, and the CFTC: La *Fédération républicaine*, elle est dans les paroisses, et il y avait une vieille tradition. Il y avait des groupes d'hommes, justement, des cercles d'hommes qui notamment à Lyon étaient très forts encore un peu partout; qui étaient des cercles alors où on joue au cartes et on joue aux boules [...] Alors ça tous les dimanches, toutes les fêtes—les gens à l'époque n'avaient pas de voitures. Et la *Fédération républicaine* étaient très appuyée là-dessus; dans la Croix Rousse, sur le plateau c'est une grande tradition, on joue au boules [...]'.

58 Another example is M. Bougerol, President of the *Patriote de St Denis*, who turned up at Federation meetings in the 4th in 1937 and 1938. Such examples could be multiplied.

59 'Ces manifestations semblent n'avoir pour but qu'une distraction. En réalité elles sont les modes de propagande presque les plus féconds, car elles rassemblent des hommes qui n'ont pas toujours nos opinions, et auprès desquels la simplicité de l'accueil; la franchise de l'amitié, la cordialité de la camaraderie sont souvent, pour les attirer à nous, des aimants plus actifs que les discours' (*L'Union républicaine*, 9-2-1936).

60 For the pre-war history of this movement see Ponson, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-45. His estimate of membership was confirmed by Joseph Lucien-Brun, who spoke of twenty circles in 1914.

the war the movement experienced substantial growth. In 1933 it claimed 5-6,000 thousand adherents in forty-two groups.⁶¹ Increased opportunity for leisure following the Eight Hour Law might have been one reason for this expansion.

In the 1930s the *Oeuvre des cercles* was still marked by the integrism of its founders.⁶² One of its traditional functions had been to protect healthy Catholic islands from contagion by anti-clericals and socialists: hence the preoccupation with organization of leisure. The *cercles* also attempted to influence the political opinions of their members. A speech by Joseph Lucien-Brun, President of the *Oeuvre des cercles* in Lyon and its suburbs from 1908 until his death in 1929, contrasted the sterile dogmatism of socialists with the practical charity of Catholics.⁶³ Lucien-Brun, an ex-Legitimist, had been a leading member of ALP before 1914, remained politically active, and was mayor of Curis au Mont d'Or. A look at his eleven fellow bureau members confirms that in the 1930s the *Oeuvre des cercles* had not shed its reactionary past. Four were nobles, and three can be identified as prominent members of *Action française*.⁶⁴

This, however, did not prevent collaboration with the Federation, for in the 1920s the Church had begun to rethink the means by which it defended its interests. Nadine-Josette Chaline, in a study of the Catholicism in Normandy, argues that formation of general Castelnau's *Fédération nationale catholique* (FNC), which played an important part in agitation against the *Cartel des gauches*, was the turning point. The Church abandoned the myth of a fundamentally Catholic population from which it was necessary only to eliminate Jews, Freemasons and Protestants in order to restore the Church's position. It now recognized that Catholicism was a minority movement, which was obliged to capitalize on its special advantages. Hence the function of the FNC as a kind of religious pressure group.⁶⁵

In the Rhône the *Ligue de défense catholique*, set up with Maurin's help in 1917, affiliated to the FNC on its foundation. By 1933 it claimed 24,000 members in 145 sections, of which fifty functioned 'normally'.⁶⁶ It is plausible that in Lyon the FNC overlapped with the *Oeuvre des cercles*. Leaders were recruited from the same milieu. Charles Jacquier, the first President, was a former Legitimist; his successor was another royalist, Gabriel Perrin. Comte Louis de Longevialle, leader of the *Action française* in the Beaujolais, was a prominent member of both organizations. Meetings of the *Ligue de défense catholique*, like those of the *Oeuvre des cercles*, were also at-

61 *Nouvelliste*, 6-5-1933. 6,000 in fifty-two groups were claimed in 1937 (*Nouveau journal*, 6-3-1937).

62 See chapter four.

63 *Nouvelliste*, 19-3-1928.

64 Count Louis de Longevialle, president of the AF group in Villefranche, Colonel Delorme, and Henry de Moinecourt, a journalist on *La République lyonnais*.

65 Nadine-Josette Chaline *Des Catholiques normands sous la Troisième république. Crises, combats, renouveaux*, Roanne/Le Coteau, 1985, passim and pp. 243-45. In the longer term emphasis was put more on rechristianization. In 1937 the *Ligue de défense catholique* became the diocesan union of *Action catholique*.

66 *Nouvelliste*, 29-5-1930, 20-11-1933.

tended by members of the Federation, from Peissel to Perret. The latter's brother conducted mass at a *journée des cadres* of the league in 1933.

Besides using the Church, the Federation attempted to use links with the *Jeunesses patriotes* to mobilize support. Victor Perret sometimes joined JP leader Taittinger on the platform at its meetings.⁶⁷ On one occasion a writer in the JP journal referred to league and Federation as 'sister organizations, pursuing the same goals'.⁶⁸ Contacts were closest at the end of the 1920s when Taittinger, taking account of the relative stability after the fall of the Cartel, decided that parliamentary action was the only possible way forward. He therefore ordered JP militants to collaborate with the *Centre de propagande des républicains nationaux* of Henri de Kerillis. The aim of this body was to create a united conservative party.⁶⁹

For the Federation the most significant result of collaboration was the creation of a party youth group. Founded in 1929 by Roger Fulchiron, a close ally of Victor Perret,⁷⁰ it had originated four years previously in agitation against the appointment to the Parisian law faculty of Georges Scelle. Fulchiron himself had taken the initiative of extending the agitation to Lyon, creating a group of National Republican Students, with links to both FR and JP.⁷¹ On his return from military service in 1929 Fulchiron secured the backing of Louis Marin, Victor Perret, Pierre Taittinger and the JP for his new venture. The youth group played an important part in Perret's reorganization of the party, obtaining a sizable membership, and preparing the way for new sections of the party proper.

Victor Perret saw the leagues as occupying a subordinate role. His dominance over the JP was doubtless favoured by common recruitment in the parish network.⁷² Control from above was taken for granted by Roger Fulchiron. In 1930 he disclaimed any intention to create yet another organization, let alone a new league. On the contrary, 'notre seul but c'est de renforcer les merveilleux comités d'anciens militants, de leur enrôler des recrues et de dresser leurs jeunes troupes'.⁷³

Links between the JP and the Federation were not, however, unproblematic. For a number of reasons Perret was distrustful of all leagues. One was that he saw them as disorganizing the right and draining money and troops from the Federation.⁷⁴

67 AN F⁷ 13235, report of 18-1-1929; *Le Nouvelliste*, 22-11-1932.

68 *L'Alerte*, August 1929.

69 Soucy, *Fascism, the First Wave*, ch. 8.

70 317 AP 76, Perret described him in a letter to Louis Marin as 'un de ces jeunes sur lesquels le parti peut fonder des espoirs sérieux', and declared his intention to add him to his departmental bureau, which he intended to rejuvenate.

71 This account of the origins of the *Groupe des jeunes* is based on an interview with M. Roger Fulchiron, 11-2-1987. For the student riots of March 1925, see Eugen Weber, *Action française: Royalism and reaction in Twentieth century France*, Stanford, 1969, pp. 157-8.

72 See Chapter 9.

73 *Le Nouveau journal*, 17-9-1930.

74 Emile Buré of *L'Ordre* earned a rebuke from Perret for having suggested the creation of a league to back Tardieu in forthcoming elections: 'Ils nous embêtent tous avec leurs ligues—car ils drainent de l'argent, entraînent les imbéciles au détriment de notre parti. Je m'empresse de vous suppléer de ne pas inventer encore quelque

In private he let it be known that Kerillis's *Centre de propagande* could not be effective as long as it aimed to replace the Federation, and criticized everyone else in spite of its own lack of mandate or competence.⁷⁵ A second reason was that in the late 1920s Kerillis and Taittinger were associated with Tardieu's conservative reformism, to which Perret was radically opposed. Those in the league who were closest politically to Perret were, unfortunately adepts of a violent street politics which Perret feared would get out of hand. After the arrest of one JP militant, Perret wrote to Taittinger: 'I had foreseen this affair and for some time I have been warning your friends in Lyon and yourself to rid yourselves of him. Not only was I not listened to, but on every occasion my counsel of prudence and my friendly observations were nearly always [sic] interpreted as expressing animosity or enmity.'⁷⁶ Indeed, even the most moderate of the JP saw the league as uniting and by implication leading the right.⁷⁷

In the end Perret saw the activism of the leagues as a threat to his version of the social and political hierarchy. But Perret was a prisoner of his own goal of mobilizing the 'popular classes' against the establishment, just as he was constrained by his links with the Church. Perret's critique of the vulnerability of the right to the individualism and selfishness of its leaders was echoed by the leagues and could potentially be turned against him.

The Centre Right

We have already seen that the centre right was dependent on the personal positions of deputies—above all Laurent Bonnevey. Son of a *conseiller général*, he had represented the Beaujolais mountains in Chamber of Deputies and Senate since 1902.⁷⁸ Like earlier Republicans with their promises of railways, he offered running water and electricity to outlying regions.⁷⁹ He joined no other party after his departure from the Federation, though he sat in parliament with the more left-leaning of the *Alliance démocratique*'s two groups, the *Républicains de gauche*. His organization consisted simply of a small committee in Tarare to which the mayors of rural communes were invited for the purpose of unanimously endorsing candidates. Bonnevey saw himself as an almost mystical emanation of the republicanism of 'la France profonde'. Again he resembled the early Republicans in seeing a direct relationship between the people and their elected representatives, unmediated by parties, or any other body.⁸⁰ His

histoire qui va drainer de l'argent et ficher du désordre partout, nous avons déjà assez d'ennuis avec *L'Echo de Paris* [i.e. Kerillis] (AN 317 AP 76, 9-7-1930, Perret to Buré).

75 317 AP 76, Perret to Paul Gand, 22-4-1930.

76 317 AP 7, Perret to Taittinger, 19-4-1929.

77 *L'Union française*, 9-3-1929.

78 Bonnevey was deputy from 1902 to 1924. Following the defeat of the conservative list in that year, he was elected to the Senate. On the return of *scrutin d'arrondissement* in 1928 he once more became deputy.

79 *Le Petit montagnard de Tarare*, 19-7-1931, 27-7-1931. The latter edition published a letter from the Ministry of Agriculture, informing of the grant of a subsidy for electrification.

80 *Le Petit Montagnard de Tarare*, 4-10-1931: 'Les principes directeurs de notre politique ont surgi spontanément de notre sol et de notre race haut beaujolais. Nous ne sommes pas allés les chercher dans des organisations électorales centralisées où nous ne les aurions rencontrés qu'atténués, dilués, entourés de réticences et de réserves'.

major concern was that ideology should not disrupt the network of favours he had constructed.

The organizational structures of the lay centre right were just as loose in the rest of the department. When Deputy Jean-Baptiste Delorme left the Federation for the Alliance in 1931 he made no effort to set up a rival organization in his constituency, merely relying on a handful of friends when the time for re-election came in 1932. By far the strongest lay centre right committee in the agglomeration was in the 6th arrondissement of Lyon, but even this body could not match the vitality of its Federation rival. The same was true on the national level, although from time to time the party leadership declared its intention to organize a 'broad democratic conservative party'.⁸¹

The structure of the Alliance facilitated domination by a wealthy elite. It is probable that from the mid-1920s the centre right competed for finance from the same banking milieu as the Federation. Auguste Isaac's presence at the odd Alliance gathering would suggest this. It is known too that Perret, thanks to competition from Etienne Fougère, had great difficulty in obtaining money for the 1926 Senate elections, and was annoyed by Fougère's attempts to obtain money for *Redressement français* in Lyon.⁸² It is also significant that four centre right activists, including Weitz and Fougère were members of the same club, the *Cercle de commerce*, previously noted for its contrast to the more conservative and Catholic *Cercle de l'union*. The lay centre right possessed even less autonomy from the ruling class than the Federation.

Business domination of the centre right should not, however, be exaggerated. Indeed, the role of elites in the centre right appears to have altered at the beginning of the 1930s. Edmond Weitz withdrew from active politics in 1930, concentrating his efforts on the Chamber of Commerce.⁸³ Fougère's role in politics in Lyon was much reduced after he was elected Deputy of the Loire in 1928. Big businessmen remained numerous in the Alliance, but leadership passed to Eugène Mansuy, a pottery merchant and to Dr. Augros. This is a reminder that the Alliance also appealed to the conservative wing of the anti-clerical bourgeoisie, as well as to a business elite disillusioned with the Federation by Perret's growing influence.

Anti-clericalism in turn was a potential link to the masses. But in fact the centre right made no attempt to mobilise the people. Where lay institutions played a role

81 See D Wileman, 'P-E Flandin and the *Alliance démocratique* 1929-1939', *French History*, 4, 1990, pp. 139-172'.

82 317 AP 76, Perret to Marin, 23-10-1926: 'J'ai reçu hier un chèque de 25,000 Frs. de qui vous savez ... pour nos élections sénatoriales. La victoire est donc complète; sans notre F ... [sic] national, [i.e. Fougère], tout cela aurait été évité'. Perret adds, 'J'apprends à l'instant que F... vient la semaine prochaine ici faire une rafle avec le groupe Mercier [...]'; J.-N. Jeanneney, *de Wendel*, p. 445 notes the tendency of business money to go to the centre right; Wileman, *op. cit.*, reports Flandin's concern that dependence upon big business compromised his independence.

83 *Journal d'Henry Morel-Journal*, 14-6-1929. Weitz informed Morel-Journal that he intended giving up his promising political career to focus upon the Chamber of Commerce.

in politicisation it was the Radicals who profited.⁸⁴ There is, on the other hand, some evidence of a link between the lay centre right and Protestantism. Small reformed communities existed in the Beaujolais and in Lyon. They were dominated by a few patrician families, although in the nineteenth century the social base of Protestantism had widened due to immigration from the Drôme and Cévennes.⁸⁵ Protestantism in Lyon had always been on the advanced wing of bourgeois politics, feeding into Radicalism and even socialism as well as into the centre right.⁸⁶ Edouard Aynard too had counted a few Protestants among his associates. Three leaders of the centre right were Protestants: Edmond Weitz, president of the Alliance has already been mentioned. Guy Aroud, who passed from the Alliance to the Radicals was from a well-known Protestant family. Jean Lambert was an Independent Radical of the 6th arrondissement. In 1936 the Federation in the 6th made a special appeal to Protestant voters, who it was said had traditionally voted for Lambert.⁸⁷ It may also be significant that the New Temple, headquarters of Protestantism in Lyon, was sited in the Brotteaux.

Doubtless Protestantism reinforced cleavages within the right. There is, however, hardly any evidence that Protestantism itself was a political issue, either between left and right, or within the right.⁸⁸ Neither is there any evidence that either Alliance or Independent Radicals was a 'Protestant party'. On the contrary, several leaders of the Alliance were practicing Catholics. Etienne Fougère had long been active in the promotion of Catholic education. Laurent Bonnevey was a Jesuit educated Catholic who in his youth had been associated with the *Chronique*.⁸⁹ Like the Federation in the days of Aynard the centre right preached toleration and avoided too close an identification with either clericalism or anti-clericalism.

This was part of a wider distrust of mass politics. In 1933 two young lawyers, Robert Cuilleret and René Bouteille, created an Alliance youth group in Lyon, which for a brief period showed a liveliness uncharacteristic of the parent organization. Its intentions were unclear, for it promised to obey the counsels of the wise men of the party, but also announced itself as the equivalent of the Radical 'Young Turks'.⁹⁰ Even though in 1933 Pierre-Etienne Flandin, the new party President had launched yet another organizational drive, the movement failed to attract the sponsorship of a

84 Gric, op. cit., p. 132-3, describes Paul Massimi, Radical deputy of the 7th arrondissement thus: 'Capitaliste heureux, M. Paul Massimi est un philanthrope; il fait profiter des bénéfices de sa maison les associations scolaires, sociales, sportives de sa circonscription, toute en améliorant la situation de son personnel. Dans le domaine de la bienfaisance, le député de VII^e est intelligemment et discrètement aidé par Mme. Massimi; elle sait fort bien discerner les oeuvres privées intéressantes qu'écarte la politique officielle, mais que le coeur d'une femme ne saurait ignorer.'

85 H. Bruston, 'Le Protestantisme Lyonnais', in *Revue de Psychologie des Peuples*, 1958; G. Le Bras, *Etudes de sociologie religieuse*, Paris ? p.376.

86 Note also that the Protestant economics professor André Philip was the first practising Christian to be elected as an SFIO deputy.

87 *Le Nouvelliste*, 3-5-1936.

88 The appeal to Lambert's voters is the only known political reference to Protestantism in the entire period

89 Ponson, op. cit., p. 105-6. Bonnevey's daughter married a son of the Legitimist Jacquier. Eugène Mansuy, his successor as leader of the Alliance in the 6th arrondissement, was a former *Sillonist*. Antoine Guinet had been a member of the governing body of the *Faculté catholique*.

90 See the two surviving issues of the group's paper, the *Sud-est républicain*, October and November, 1933.

national leader. Both Flandin and Paul Reynaud refused to accept the honorary presidency.⁹¹

How is this combination of elitism and hostility to ideology to be interpreted? It is insufficient to see the centre right as a relic of an outmoded style of politics, doomed to disappear in the modern period, for 'notable parties' have shown considerable capacity for survival in France.⁹² It is more convincing to see the centre right (and indeed the centre in a more general sense), less in party terms than as a strategic location within social and political relations. We have already seen that for deputies like Laurent Bonnevey the centre right was a means of access to government patronage. Similarly it was a location through which interest groups like the Chamber of Commerce, the USE, and a host of bodies like the veterans' movement could make contact with the state. It was also possible in the centre right for groups with quite different aims to draw together the various strands of French politics. It was possible to build alliances by blurring the normal cleavages between capital and labour, industry and agriculture, big and small business, clericals and anti-clericals. For these reasons formal structures and ideology were a hindrance. Consequently the centre right was made of people with diverse backgrounds, ranging from Catholic bankers whose fathers had backed the Federation, to anti-clerical civil servants who had quarrelled with the Radicals. Often the discourse of the centre right consisted of little more than a celebration of its central position in political life.⁹³

Social Catholicism and the PDP

For Jean Raymond-Laurent the PDP was an organization of notables.⁹⁴ But another national leader, Marcel Prélôt, emphasized that 'à la différence des autres partis de droite et du centre, le PDP se caractérise par sa croissance quasi-spontanée et comme par en bas. Elle est l'oeuvre réellement démocratique et populaire de militants obscurs et dévoués [...]'.⁹⁵ The PDP may have been a small party, but its principles of organization were unlike those of Federation or Alliance. Its local organizations were known as 'sections', a term borrowed from the left implying both democratic discussion and submission to majority opinion. This contrasts with the connotations of secretiveness and elitism in the term 'committee'. Like the left the PDP was open about differences in opinion in its meetings.⁹⁶ This reflects its acceptance of social conflict and their desire to institutionalize it, whereas the Federation and Alliance clung to the myth of a

91 Papers of Paul Reynaud. Thanks to Julien Jackson for this information. Papers of the *Alliance démocratique*, carton 1. Reynaud refused the honour on the advice of a local notable Julien Riboud.

92 This is the implication of W.D. Irvine's work.

93 *Le Sud-est républicain*, October 1933: the principal preoccupation of the journal of the Alliance youth group was a critique of 'la politique en ligne brisée'.

94 Raymond-Laurent, *op.cit.*, p. 96. This conclusion is echoed by R.E.M. Irvine, *Christian Democracy in France*, London, 1973, pp. 41 ff.

95 *Bulletin des Démocrates populaires* (Région Lyonnais), January 1929.

96 For example the section of the 3rd arrondissement witnessed a debate between a shopkeeper and a white collar worker on the issue of purchasing cooperatives. *Le Nouveau journal*, 14-4-1931.

unique national interest, and attributed division to the dissolvent propaganda of politicians and/or foreigners.

In terms of party membership and votes the PDP was only moderately successful. But the PDP is significant because it formed part of a network of social Catholicism which included the *Chronique sociale*, the CFTC, certain reviews, and which reached into the Federation.

Jean Raymond-Laurent correctly stresses the independence of the PDP, which aimed to end the connection between the Church and political reaction.⁹⁷ Nevertheless the PDP was deeply imbricated in the life of the Church. Claudius Dériol described PDP sections as 'des bandes paroissiaux' (in contrast to the *Jeune république*, whose members 'fréquentaient le bistro autant que la sacristie'). The PDP could not match the influence of the Federation in the parishes. Most priests supported the Federation, but many *abbés* favoured the PDP. Dominicans, with their democratic tradition, were prominent, as were those who had been members of the *Sillon*.⁹⁸ Sympathetic clergy were often attached to the parish-based *Cercles d'études sociales*. These offshoots of the *Chronique sociale* frequently led to involvement in the PDP. Whereas the Federation mobilized a relatively passive rank and file through encadrement of leisure activities, the PDP grew out of democratic discussion groups. No doubt this confirmed Auguste Isaac's fear of allowing young *abbés* to counsel youths of eighteen to twenty years, when both were ignorant of economic matters.⁹⁹

Claudius Dériol is typical of PDP militants. He was introduced to the *Chronique* by a former *Sillon* member, François Perrier, who was also animator of the PDP's youth group. In the *Cercle d'étude* of St Pierre des Terreaux, Dériol, then a young bank employee, met Georges Forestier of the CFTC. Dériol went on to become editorial secretary of *La Voix sociale*. He also presided over a support group for the Dominican journal, *Sept*, which was particularly active in Lyon.¹⁰⁰

From a rather different background was Benoît Carteron, an activist in the Catholic mutual aid movement who joined the CFTC while working in the office of his father's salted meat factory at St Symphorian. In 1933 he set up his own business. In following year he became president of a PDP section in his home commune. Carteron was to succeed Laurent Bonnevey as president of the *Conseil général* in 1957.¹⁰¹

97 Raymond-Laurent, op. cit., p. 76: 'Ils [les démocrates populaires] distinguent rigoureusement entre le spirituel et le temporel. Jamais ils ne demandèrent de directives, ni même de conseils, à la hiérarchie religieuse, et celle-ci ne cherche nullement à les influencer'. Claudius Dériol confirms that in Lyon the PDP was unable to count on the support of Cardinal Maurin.

98 Interview with Claudius Dériol, 18-6-1987: 'Les curés étaient à la Fédération républicaine, et puis les abbés étaient au PDP [...] On comptait un peu dans ces milieux, sûrement, mais c'était pas aussi solide. Il y avait le réseau dominicain, qui était fortement implanté [...]'.
99 Auguste Isaac, *Journal*, 28-7-1928, quoted in Ponson, op. cit., p. 316.

100 Interview with Claudius Dériol, 15-6-1987, 18-6-1987.
For the *Amis de Sept*, see Coutrot, op. cit., p. 196.

101 Interview with Benoît Carteron in *Atout Rhone*, September-October, 1988.

There are many other examples of the links between the PDP and the social Catholic network, which it would be tedious to enumerate.¹⁰² Suffice it to note that Jacques Turret, founding president of the PDP federation of the Rhône, left the party to succeed Marius Gonin as Secretary-General of the *Semaines sociales* in 1938.

It is important not to exaggerate either the affinity between *Chronique* and the PDP or the homogeneity of the political views of *Chronique* activists. There was a range of opinion in the *Chronique*. One member of the editorial board, Henri Franchet went from the local leadership of the ALP to show a strong sympathy for the *Croix de Feu* and PSF.¹⁰³ Christian Ponson indicates that the events of 6th February 1934 were at the origin of divergences of opinion within the *Chronique*.¹⁰⁴ There were also a minority of sympathizers of the centre left *Jeune république* in the *Groupes d'études*.¹⁰⁵

But if supporters of either moderate left or extreme right were rare, links between the *Chronique*, the Federation and the PDP are of greater significance. There were two key figures. The first was Marius Gonin. He insisted that the *Chronique* itself remain apolitical.¹⁰⁶ But whilst too much cannot be read into the fact that he was a subscriber to the journal of the Federation,¹⁰⁷ Gonin's role in the local press is a different matter. In the 1920s he was managing director of the *Nouveau journal* and editor of *Salut public*. Both dailies were sympathetic to the left wing of the Federation and to the moderate right more generally.¹⁰⁸

The second key figure is François Peissel, a link between PDP and Federation. He was not the only Federation *élu* to attend PDP meetings. In September 1934 a number of Federation municipal councillors attended a PDP *fête de la famille* held at the *Foyer de Perrache*.¹⁰⁹ Their presence derived less from conviction than from recognition of the electoral value of remaining on good terms with the PDP. But for François Peissel, whose ties to the CFTC have already been noted, it was more a matter of conviction. When in 1932 Peissel refused to join the Federation group in the

102 CFTC speakers were common at PDP meetings: Georges Forestier himself spoke to the 3rd section on the 'Statut légal des employés' (*Nouveau journal*, 20-3-1930). Felix Charnettant and Dr Biot, both PDP activists, were active in the *Chronique's* *commission mixte* and the *Cercle d'études médicales* respectively. The PDP itself organized 'Cercles d'études militants'.

103 Not to be confused with a *Croix de Feu*/PSF activist of the same name.

104 Christian Ponson, 'La Chronique sociale de Lyon en 1940', in *Eglises et chrétiens dans la deuxième guerre mondiale*, Lyon, 1981, p. 28.

105 Interview with Claudius Dériol, 18-6-1987. Dériol remembered frequent disputes between himself and the local leader of Sangnier's league, Avenin, which often continued in the street. On one occasion members of the JR stormed the platform at a PDP meeting.

106 Ponson, *op. cit.*, p. 27. Claudius Dériol tells us that propaganda for the PDP had to be 'très officieux', but exaggerates when he says that Gonin had 'un espèce d'allergie pour la politique'. We saw in Chapter four that Gonin was somewhat too far to the right for some CFTC militants.

107 Ponson, *art. cit.*, p. 30. C. Ponson also notes that on the occasion of the *Semaine sociale* held at Lyon in 1926 there was for the first time a sign of rapprochement between Gonin and the integrist right. This may, however, have been conjunctural, for in 1926 there was, in opposition to the Cartel, an exceptional degree of conservative unity. At about the same time Gonin was admitted to the *Congrégation des messieurs de Lyon*.

108 *Archives de la Chronique sociale*, malle 3, dossiers *Nouveau journal*, and *Salut public* especially report and letter of 6-11-1930, signed by Gonin.

109 *Le Nouveau Journal*, 9-2-1934. See also *Le Nouveau Journal* 7-2-1935, and *Le Nouvelliste* 14-10-1928.

chamber, it was to follow Georges Pernot, national leader of the pro-PDP tendency in the Federation.¹¹⁰

Victor Perret, for whom the PDP were 'red fish in holy water', was never seen at a PDP gathering.¹¹¹ He commented to Louis Marin that the *Semaine sociale* of Nancy in 1926 was 'un peu démagogique'.¹¹² There were, however, some elements of the social Catholic movement which did support Perret's wing of the Federation. The most important were sections of the JAC and those sympathetic to it, such as Jean-Marie Parrel. One leader of the Catholic engineers' union USIC was also a pro-Perret Federation activist. But whether it was linked to the left or the right of the Federation, social Catholicism was a source of instability, for it brought together religious and social tensions in the right.

Conclusion

By 1935 little was left of the elitist Federation founded by Edouard Aynard. His protégé, Auguste Isaac, resigned from the party of which he had once been national president in 1929. Typically he asked that this be kept secret from the rank and file.¹¹³ Victor Perret had succeeded in removing the Federation from the grip of the 'bourgeoisie en place'. But the Federation remained a hybrid party, combining revitalised notable politics in parts of the countryside and the 2nd arrondissement with a wider audience mobilized through the parishes. Collaboration with the *Oeuvre des cercles* restored in some measure the influence of a section of the elites which had been marginalized since the end of the nineteenth century. It is possible to trace a line from intransigent Orleanism and Legitimism through the ALP to Victor Perret.

Perret derived what ability he had to ignore the complaints of Isaac from alliances with JP and Church. But this reduced his room for manoeuvre in other directions. First, Perret's criticisms of the organizational incoherence of the right were taken up by sections of the extreme right, thereby threatening his hierarchical view of society. Second, the Federation was a prisoner of the Catholic-anticlerical conflict. It was perceived by the wider public as a clerical party, and consequently as a tool of reactionary elites. Conflict within the Church was also imported into the Federation. This is why the growth of social Catholicism and the PDP posed so many problems for the Federation. Dispersal of the right was accompanied by, and partly caused by fragmentation of the political unity of Catholicism.

¹¹⁰ Irvine, op. cit., p. 13. Sallès also joined the *Groupe Pernot*, but he was considerably to the right of Peissel. His adhesion was no doubt a tactical one, for in this period Perret's extreme nationalism was not electorally profitable.

A third key figure is Jules Maire, proprietor and editor of *Le Petit montagnard de Tarare*. Until 1935 Maire was a member of the departmental committee of the FR. Yet the columns of his paper frequently included reprints from *Le Petit démocrate*, and on his resignation from the Federation, Maire announced his intention to set up a section of the PDP in Tarare.

¹¹¹ According to Claudius Dériol Victor Perret was 'l'ennemi numéro un' for the PDP.

¹¹² AN 317 AP 76, Perret to Marin, 9-8-1927.

¹¹³ AN 317 AP 73, Isaac to Guiter, s.d. ?1929 'Je ne vous demande pas de la dire tout haut en public, mais je ne vous défend pas de la faire connaître à nos plus vieux amis'.

To sum up, whilst the difficult adaptation of elitist conservatism to mass politics was an important component in the realignment of the Lyonnais right, it is insufficient to see reorganization separately from parish politics, and from the efforts of sections of the ruling class to resist social and economic change. In the late 1920s and early 1930s these issues crystallized around the question of whether or not the Federation should back the conservative reformism of André Tardieu.

Chapter seven

The parliamentary right and conservative reformism

The parliamentary right in the Rhône faced three related problems. First, it had to overcome its electoral weakness. In practice this meant that it had to find a way of either winning over the Radical electorate or of enmeshing the party itself in a permanent alliance. Second, it had to cope with a nascent mobilization of rank and file conservatives, evident in the CFTC, the PDP and other offshoots of social Catholicism. Third, it had to find a way of reconciling competing factions of the ruling class.

Similar problems were faced by the right nationally. Indeed, open conflict within the Lyonnais right was precipitated by the attempt of André Tardieu and other centre right politicians to put an end to the chronic instability of French politics. Tardieu aimed to realize the old conservative dream of a broad conservative party on the British model. The results in both France and the Rhône were the opposite of those counted upon. By 1932 the disintegration of conservative politics which later led to the rise of the leagues was already underway.

Conservative Reformism

The right wing administrations of 1928 to 1932 had the best reforming record of any Third Republican governments prior to the Popular Front. For once there was considerable room for manoeuvre. The right had won an overall majority in the elections of April 1928. In the Rhône too the elections had been a triumph for the right, which won four seats. In addition Victor Augagneur, one-time socialist mayor of Lyon, won the 7th arrondissement on a nationalist platform.¹ Meanwhile the Radicals and socialists were at each others throats. Herriot's quarrel with his socialist allies in the municipal council of Lyon delighted *modérés* everywhere. Communist adoption of the 'class against class' tactic further divided the left.

The economy was expanding. The state budget was consequently in surplus. This helped to create an audience for partisans of expansion and modernization in business and political spheres. Even a bastion of orthodoxy like the *Comité des Forges* was not totally averse to change.² In Lyon the progressives Fougère and Charbin presided over the SFS. Tardieu's service at the Ministry of Agriculture reas-

1 The right won three out of four rural constituencies: Bonneville won the Beaujolais mountains; Peissel won Lyon l'Arbresle and J-B. Delorme won Givors. Sallès won the 2nd arrondissement. Augagneur sat with Clemencist nationalists like Franklin-Bouillon in parliament. His victory was a personal one, for in his death in 1930 the seat reverted to the Radicals.

2 In 1927 the relatively progressive Lambert-Ribot took over leadership of the *Comité des forges*. There were also leadership changes in the coal owners association. (Martin Fine, 'Toward Corporatism. The Movement for Capital Labour Conciliation in France', Ph. D. Thesis, Wisconsin, 1971). Prior to the elections Mercier had reassured the forgemasters and his conservative rival, the UIE, that *Redressement français* wanted a government of the right, not the centre (F/ 13 240, reports of 3-12-1927, 17-12-1927, 16-12-1927). See also Jeanneney, *De Wendel*, pp. 375-6).

sured the rural world. In the Rhône even conservative spokesmen for agriculture like Félix Garcin admired the reformist Tardieu.

There is no need to go further into the details of national politics. Suffice it to say that reform is most often associated with the Tardieu ministries of October 1929 to December 1930.³ For one historian they epitomized the neo-capitalist movement for renovation'.⁴ Ernest Mercier was admitted to the inner circles of government.⁵ In fact, reform began under Poincaré, whose decision to stabilize the Franc at a relatively low level shortly after the elections was a first victory for the modernisers.⁶ Renovation continued after Tardieu's fall under Pierre Laval. All the same, the former was the most coherent exponent of conservative reformism. His programme included five components.⁷

1. Tardieu took up ideas on the reform of the state current in right wing circles since the days of Millerand. He favoured a single round first past the post voting system. He reduced the number of ministers in his cabinet, refused to consult the parties on the formation of his government, and promised to make frequent use of the question of confidence to reinforce his authority. He collaborated with Kerillis's *Centre de propagande*, which he saw as the means to create a united conservative party. In sum these measures were rather timid. Tardieu had not yet become the authoritarian of the mid-1930s.⁸ He did make use of secret government funds to finance the *Croix de Feu*. But at this stage the goal was renovation of constitutional conservatism.

2. The reformed state was to play a more interventionist role in the economy.⁹ The central measure was a 'National Re-tooling Plan'. It was an ambitious programme of public works, including rural electrification, water purification, and improvements to the telephone network. The intention was to bind the clientele of the Radicals to the right, whilst providing opportunities for industry. Tardieu was not in any sense a Keynesian *avant la lettre*. Retooling was to be financed out of tax surpluses.¹⁰

3. Wage-earners would be won over by social reform. A long overdue Social Insurance Act was voted in 1928, with rectifications in 1930.¹¹ In 1932 a Family Allowances Act was passed. Also a product of this period was Loucheur's law facilitat-

3 Laval then took over the premiership until February 1932, when Tardieu resumed the job of President of the Council.

4 Kuisel, *Capitalism*, p. 90.

5 Kuisel, *Mercier*, p. 55.

6 Jeanneney, *De Wendel*, pp. 321-354, 380-408.

7 To rationalize the policies of this period in this way is to some extent artificial, for they were the outcome of a complex process of bargaining and compromise. For a good summary of the aims of Tardieu see J.-M. Mayeur, *La vie politique sous la Troisième République*, Paris, Seuil, 1984, pp. 291-293, and Monique Clague 'Vision and myopia in the new politics of André Tardieu', *FHS*, 8 1973.

8 Taratowsky, 'La droite et l'état', in *Cahiers de l'institut Maurice Thorez*, 1978, p. 129.

9 Kuisel, *Capitalism*, pp. 66-69, 91; the young under-secretary for economic affairs, André François-Poncet claimed that the state had a duty to guide and enliven private economic activity. Poincaré and Mercier worked together to encourage the creation of a national oil refining industry.

10 Clague op. cit., *passim*.

11 It was accepted on condition that it be modified to take account of the needs of agriculture. Appropriate rectifications were passed in 1930, and the legislation implemented in July of that year.

ing the building of low rent accommodation. These measures were accompanied by vigorous repression of the communists, carried out by the Prefect of Police Chiappe.

4. In an effort to improve human capital, secondary education became free in 1930 to 1933. The government looked favourably upon the idea of creating a single track secondary school system, the *école unique*.

5. Briand remained Foreign Minister throughout the period. His policy of rapprochement with Germany was accompanied by encouragement of international economic collaboration. His project for a European tariff union was warmly received in exporting circles.¹² One purpose of Briand's foreign policy was to reinforce the economic prosperity on which Tardieu pinned his hopes.

In sum, Tardieu's reforms were designed to use economic prosperity and social reform to integrate wage earners into a broad conservative consensus led by progressive businessmen and politicians. Economic interest would transcend outdated quarrels about religion. This can be seen partly as a reassertion of the optimistic liberal-republican attitudes of the 1870s and 1880s against the increasingly Malthusian demands of some interests in the 1920s.¹³ But unlike the early republicans Tardieu realized that the promise of social mobility was an inadequate guarantor of the loyalties of the working class and lower middle class to the Republic. He was well aware that this represented a major shift in the socio-political foundations of the Republic towards the working class, away from small business and the peasantry. But it was hoped that national retooling would keep the peasantry happy. Electrification of the countryside can be seen in the same way as railways in the 1870s: a means of convincing the peasantry that economic progress offered new possibilities, not decline.

By 1931, however, the high hopes of 1928 had begun to evaporate. Tardieu fell from power in December 1930. Nazi gains and economic crisis in Germany put paid to the hopes of Briand. It was unfortunate too that the high point of the neo-capitalist movement in France coincided with the first signs that the world economic crisis would not spare France. As a result employers rapidly lost their enthusiasm for social reform. The Social Insurance Act was passed against the wishes of most of French industry. Tardieu's retooling plan was converted into a conventional public works programme.

Even without these difficulties it is unlikely that Tardieu would have succeeded. He failed to persuade the Radicals to accept the position of junior partners in a right wing coalition. No doubt they feared Tardieu's openly expressed intention of stripping the party of either its clientele or its left wing tradition.¹⁴

¹² Fridenson, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

¹³ See Chapter 1.

¹⁴ On Tardieu and the Radicals see Bernstein, *Histoire du Parti Radical*, pp. 154-169; Clague, *op. cit.*, p. 110. Even the most moderate of Radicals never ceased to regard Tardieu as a 'grand chef réactionnaire'.

Perhaps more seriously, Tardieu's own coalition showed signs of breaking up. In Parliament the right wing of the Federation began to destabilize the majority once Marin had been evicted from the cabinet in October 1928. Marin and his forgemaster friends de Wendel and de Warren led the opposition. Open conflict erupted in the summer of 1929 when Poincaré's government proposed ratification of the Mellon-Béranger and Churchill-Caillaux accords on war debts, which had been negotiated in 1926, but never submitted to Parliament for ratification. The debate over ratification took place against the background of negotiations over German reparations. In July Marin and fifteen other Federation members threw their party into crisis by voting against ratification. Three months later Marin's vote ensured the fall of the Briand government, which had just negotiated at the Hague an agreement whereby France would begin to evacuate the Rhineland once the Young Plan for reparations had been ratified by the Germans.

For Jean-Noël Jeanneney the central problem was that Marin and his followers, unlike the rest of the Federation put nationalism above the need to preserve the *Union nationale* as a bulwark of social order.¹⁵ In line with his organizational thesis William Irvine minimizes the ideological issue, stressing instead the resistance of deputies to Marin's attempts to discipline them.¹⁶ There is no doubting the fear of renewed international conflict after the slaughter of the Great War. We have seen that in the Rhône organization was a key issue in conservative politics. But neither issue can be isolated from the government's programme as a whole. Marin and his allies attacked the entire range of reforms. Indeed, discontent about issues such as unwillingness to cut taxes and a projected reform of secondary education was rather more widespread in the Federation than was hostility to Briand's foreign policy.

Above all the Federation opposed the Social Insurance Acts. Since this was a major issue in politics throughout the interwar period it is worth explaining what was at stake. Very few in the Federation opposed compulsory social insurance in principle—agricultural interests were the main exception. Conflict was over the form of the law. Simplifying greatly, the government proposed a regime in which wage earners would be obliged to adhere to a *caisse d'assurance*. They were to be run jointly by employee, employer and state with standard contributions in all industries. Those who did not adhere to an existing body, and the majority were not expected to do so, would become members of the *caisse départementale*.

Those who opposed the law preferred a system which would be run entirely by existing mutual aid societies. More often than not these had been created by employers. Since these bodies would be empowered to set their own levels of contribution this solution was particularly favoured by those employers with high labour

¹⁵ Jeanneney, *De Wendel*, pp. 415-435.

¹⁶ Irvine, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

costs—hence the opposition of forgemasters like de Warren and de Wendel in the Federation. Mutual aid societies were also favoured by the Church, which saw them as essential to its charitable functions. What was at stake then was not just the profitability of agriculture and certain industries, but an important means of social and ideological control. The Federation was split over the question. In 1930 many of its deputies voted in favour of Xavier Vallat's proposal for mutualization. In other words, the Social Insurance Law brought together both religious and economic tensions within the right, epitomized, as we saw in Chapter one, by the Catholic forgemaster de Wendel.

There was also extra-parliamentary opposition to the Social Insurance Law. Discontent was evident in two groups. The *Federation des contribuables* mobilised shopkeepers and small business, while *Défense paysan*, led by Henri Dorgères expressed peasant discontent. In 1930 the two organizations formed a common front to oppose the Social Insurance Act. Whereas the taxpayers' movement recruited from both Radical and conservative voters, *Défense paysan* took its support wholly from the right. In both movements mobilization of the rank and file of the right against their own leaders co-existed with manipulation by sections of the elites.¹⁷ Both organizations had a fascist tone.¹⁸

Tardieu's reforms resulted in conflicts within the conservative majority, and caused many rank and file conservatives (and even Radicals) to reject their traditional leaders. It is here that one has to locate the origins of the crisis which led to the emergence of the leagues in the mid-1930s.

Organized Business and Agriculture

The best way to approach the development of this crisis in the Rhône is to begin with the most important of the organized interests in the department—the USE and the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber, and to a lesser extent the USE, were the heirs of the liberal tradition of Aynard. Leaders like Riboud of the USE and Morel-Journel of the Chamber were therefore attracted to the lay centre right. Because of the centre right's quasi-permanent presence in government, the USE and Chamber also had practical reasons for working with the moderates. Conservative reformism represented therefore a double crisis for these bodies. Tardieu's efforts to discipline the right threatened the personal contacts on which lobbying depended, while social reform represented a break with the liberal tradition.

In accordance with its laissez-faire tradition the Chamber had consistently opposed social reform. In 1927 the idea of compulsory paid holidays was rejected on the grounds that it would have an adverse affect on competitiveness. Only market forces

¹⁷ The conservative deputy François d'Harcourt saw Dorgères as an employee on F3,000 per month.

¹⁸ P Ory, 'Le Dorgèrisme. Institution et discours d'un colère paysan', RHMC, 1975, pp. 168-190; W Hoisington Jr., *Taxpayer Revolt in France*, Stanford, 1973.

could determine whether or not employers granted holidays.¹⁹ Not surprisingly, Chamber of Commerce publications are full of criticisms of the Social Insurance Acts.²⁰ In the privacy of the Chamber the reasons for opposition were candidly expressed. It was regretted that the idea of mutualism had been discarded, 'd'autant plus qu'il ne faut pas perdre de vue que les risques divers sont très variables suivant les professions. Mais on a voulu faire du principe de l'unité de l'assurance une règle absolue'.²¹ A spokesman for the dyeing industry argued that existing mutual aid schemes, because they were mutual, kept down the sickness rate and encouraged the loyalty of workers, especially immigrants, to the enterprise.²²

All of this is in accordance with the liberal tradition. But in fact the attitude of the Chamber of Commerce to conservative reformism was complex. This was partly because aspects of government policy were in accordance with the liberal tradition. The silk industry, with the backing of the Chamber, implied approval for Briand's foreign policy in its appeal for implementation of the Young Plan as a means of fending off the international economic crisis.²³

This in turn implied maintaining Briand in the Cabinet, opposition to Marin's destabilization of the government, and in consequence a tacit acceptance of social reform. This is a reminder that although the liberal-silk majority in the Chamber was more or less united in opposing the explicitly reformist challenge of Edmund Weitz, some questioned aspects of liberalism. Concrete evidence can be seen in the response of the Chamber to the idea of family allowances. It was to be regretted that taxation should replace private initiative. But the Chamber reluctantly approved compulsory allowances because 'certain large concerns, especially in the building industry', believed that their own private schemes put them at a cost disadvantage compared to those firms which did not pay allowances.²⁴ The attitude of big business was that if there had to be social reform, then it must be applied to small firms as well as large. In this the Chamber differed from medium and small firms, who would, in an ideal world, have preferred no insurance system at all. These differences resurfaced on several occasions.

Flexibility can also be detected in the Chamber's response to other aspects of government policy.²⁵ In line with liberal orthodoxy the Chamber demanded tax

¹⁹ CRCL, 1927, pp. 306-8.

²⁰ Jangot, speaking for building employers, saw it as a 'class law' which would end up as a burden to society as a whole (CRCL, 1929, p. 703); Attale Guigou, on behalf of the *fabricants de soieries*, feared that 'aujourd'hui les Assurances Sociales peuvent faire naître des vocations de malades professionnelles; demain les allocations chômage, si elles sont distribuées sans discernement semeront les germes du mal terrible qui sévit sur la nation voisine' (CRCL, 1930, pp. 583-4).

²¹ PVCCL, 16-2-1928.

²² CRCL, 1928, p. 674.

²³ CRCL, 1929, p. 601.

²⁴ PVCCL, 24-10-29.

²⁵ One example is that some in the silk industry complained that stabilization of the Franc at too high a level harmed exports. But it was accepted that fixed exchange rates were an index of business confidence (CRCL, 1928, pp. 662-3).

cuts.²⁶ Yet the Chamber welcomed Tardieu's plan for national retooling on condition that it did not involve new taxes, and that it involved 'true public works'. Even liberals could not resist public spending upon themselves.²⁷

The result of such hesitation was an implicit tension within the liberal bloc between the largest firms and the rest. This fits with the growing political isolation of big business in Lyon that has been noted on several occasions. It was opposed in principle to aspects of government policy, especially social insurance, but was pushed towards the centre right by three pressures: a pragmatic wish to come to terms with reform; the fact that the centre right was the route to influence upon the state, and the fact that the Federation was increasingly in the hands of reactionaries like Perret. This in turn helps to understand the significance of Victor Perret's suspicion of 'la bourgeoisie en place'.

Some of this holds true for the USE. We have seen that President Félix Garcin maintained good personal relations with Tardieu. He campaigned for him in the USE bulletin, while Tardieu obtained information on the political situation in the Rhône from Garcin.²⁸ This was in spite of the fact that Garcin taught political economy at the Catholic University, and was managing director of the *Nouvelliste*, a rather extreme opponent of Tardieu. This paradox can be reconciled by the fact that Garcin's support for Tardieu was an outgrowth of the lobbying practices of the USE, and by Tardieu's responsiveness to the demands of agriculture.²⁹ Garcin's sympathy for the conservative leader was not incompatible with hostility to social reform. Garcin was vocal in the campaign for a non-compulsory system of social insurance for agriculture. His attitudes are analogous to those of Vice-president Julien Riboud, antipathetic to social reform, but also attracted to the centre right—in this case also by the Ay-nardian republicanism of his family.

The USE's politics then were more advanced than its views on the social question. This reinforced the nascent gap between the rank and file and the leaders of the USE. The USE's hostility to social reform contrasted with the peasant spokesman Jean-Marie Parrel's advocacy of a system of compulsory allowances financed by the state.³⁰ Parrel turned therefore to the 'anti-establishment' followers of Victor Perret. But peasant views were scarcely better represented there, which perhaps explains why younger peasants were more interested in the *Croix de Feu*.

26 CRCLL, 1929, p. 623. This was another reason to oppose social insurance and family allowances.

27 PVCCL, 2-10-1930. On these grounds the Chamber rejected the version of the bill which emerged from the Radical dominated finance commission, which had the double disadvantage of being more costly and more rural.

28 Gayet, op. cit., pp. 99-110. Garcin, although managing director of *Le Nouvelliste*, appears to have exerted little influence over its political line.

29 Barral, op. cit., pp. 222-230: He was responsible for strengthening protectionism and for measures to maintain the prices of wine and wheat.

30 Pin, op. cit., p. 83: in 1932 he failed to gain acceptance for this idea from his colleagues in the Chamber of Agriculture.

Both Chamber of Commerce and USE combined liberalism and social conservatism with a willingness to adapt these principles to practical realities. Neither were wholly in tune with the dominant political tendencies in Rhône conservatism. Neither the reformism of François Peissel, nor the Malthusianism of some right wing-Radicals nor the traditionalism of Victor Perret entirely suited them. The lay centre right was their only possible political home.

The Centre Right and Tardieu

The problem was that the centre right, in spite of the defection of certain deputies to it, was an ineffective political force. It consisted of a coalition of independents like Bonnevey, Independent Radicals, and the *Alliance démocratique*, which agreed on little more than the value of centrism, democracy and Republicanism. The question becomes even more complex if we include the PDP in the centre right, and remember the proximity of François Peissel's wing of the Federation to it. In this section we will look at the lay centre right. It can be seen as consisting of three components, each with differing attitudes to conservative reformism.

The first was composed of the remnants of the liberal tradition, which combined Republicanism, economic liberalism and a tolerant Catholicism. August Isaac is representative for his links both with Aynard and the Chamber of Commerce.³¹ Isaac resigned from the Federation in 1929, although he kept his resignation secret, continued to occupy the position of Honorary President, and even attended the presentation of the Legion of Honour to Victor Perret. Subsequently he was not politically active, but he did attend an occasional meeting held by the Alliance.

Isaac's views were made plain in his letter of resignation from the Federation, which came in the midst of the crisis caused by the attacks of Marin and Perret on Tardieu and Briand.³² His grievances can be grouped under three headings. First Isaac was a supporter of the Locarno Treaty.³³ Rather pessimistically he asked what alternative there was for a country which had been abandoned by its allies, had undertaken a hasty demobilization in 1918, which possessed the mere skeleton of an army, and in which pacifism had been stirred up by anti-militarist teachers. More positively, he called for a 'modern foreign policy', in which young people would get to know each other in order to learn to settle together the economic questions which are the causes of international conflict.

Continuing the liberal theme Isaac denounced the Federation for not having done enough to prevent 'the pillage of public finances'. Its deputies were charged with supporting veterans' pensions, salary increases for civil servants and social in-

31 See Chapter 4. Henry Morel-Journel regarded himself as Isaac's own choice for the presidency of the Chamber.

32 Isaac said of Victor Perret that his 'idolization of Marin makes one laugh'.

33 317 AP 82, National Council meeting of 24-10-1925. Isaac and Marin had disagreed over Locarno from the beginning.

urance. Businessmen, he said, would be reluctant to contribute to a party which had so little regard for public finances. Here the target is the Federation left, rather than Perret and Marin, who were as opposed to these measures as he.

Finally, Isaac attacked the political line of the Federation: 'On m'a dit que Marin veut ménager les patriotes d'origine monarchique qui sont dans nos rangs et se sont fait élire sous notre drapeau républicain et avec notre argent'.³⁴

Isaac then spoke from the position of a political republican and economic liberal. As such he was as opposed to conservative reformism as to Victor Perret's brand of nationalism. His views are similar to those of Julien Riboud. Riboud broke with the Federation after its bureau had refused to accept his proposal for a motion to the National Council of the Federation in October 1929. In it he followed Isaac in calling for maintenance of the Federation in its 'centre/centre-right tradition', tax cuts, mutualization of social insurance, and 'international pacification'. His demand for a policy of self-sufficiency in wheat illustrates the importance of the centre right to sectional interests.³⁵ In 1932, following Victor Perret's final victory over François Peissel, Riboud resigned from the Federation.

Another who could trace his roots into moderate Republicanism was Laurent Bonnevey. But he differed from Isaac and Riboud in that whilst remaining faithful to Aynard's Republicanism, he was further to the left on social issues. He was a firm supporter of the whole range of Tardieu's reforms. His resignation from the Federation in 1927 had been provoked by a quarrel with Louis Marin over the Locarno treaties. He also campaigned in favour of Social Insurance and cheap housing.³⁶ He parted company from Tardieu only in his rejection of party discipline. But Bonnevey argued that loose party organization would permit him to pursue his own ideas on the social question free from the interference of reactionaries like Perret.³⁷ Bonnevey in fact forms a link between liberal Republicanism, modern reformist conservatism, and social Catholicism, for in his youth he had been associated with the *Groupes d'études*.

The second, and perhaps least influential, element in the lay centre right overlapped with the Radical Party. It comprised the anti-clerical and Republican wing of the conservative bourgeoisie, weaker in Lyon than in other cities because of the Catholicism of most employers. The existence of a small minority of progressive *fabricants non-usiniers*, such as Joseph Fructus, B. J. Van Gelder and Eugène Schulz has already been referred to. Schulz claimed in the Mascaraud Committee to represent a 'liberal bourgeoisie', which recognised the dependence of commerce upon the pur-

34 317 AP 73, Isaac to Guiter, 19-4-1930: 'Je me demande s'il ne vaudrait pas mieux essayer de leur faire comprendre qu'il n'y a plus rien de commun entre notre temps et celui de Louis XVI ou de Napoléon [...]'.
35 317 AP 73, Riboud to Guiter, 5-10-1929.

36 *Le Nouvelliste*, 2-10-1928. For the *Nouvelliste* Bonnevey was one of those politicians who believed that cleverness consisted in disarming adversaries by giving them satisfaction on all points (15-5-1926).

37 317 AP 76, Bonnevey article from *La Nation*, 1926.

chasing power of the masses.³⁸ But Schulz and his friends were ambiguous in their attitude towards conservative reformism, for he and his allies were merchant manufacturers who saw collaboration with the Radicals as a means of preserving the artisanate on which they depended. Hence Schulz's readiness to echo Radical denunciations of big capital.

The third strand in the lay centre right is represented by progressive employers. These included certain *fabricant-usiniers* like Etienne Fougère, and above all representatives of the engineering industry like Edmund Weitz. We have seen that this group had often emerged from the pro-Radical and anti-clerical petty bourgeoisie. Fougère and Weitz were virtually alone among employers in accepting the Social Insurance Law. Fougère voted for it in Parliament. Like all defenders of the law Weitz accepted that it was not perfect, but went on to say that the engineering industry was preparing for the implementation of the law in the 'widest and most loyal sense'. Unlike other business leaders he did not demand a delay in its introduction.³⁹ He also called for Herriot to break with the SFIO and take the lead in a movement for 'reform and democracy'.⁴⁰ In the elections of 1928 Guy Aroud, whose proximity to the engineering industry has been noted, campaigned in the 7th arrondissement for reform. He called for a 'république syndicale', to be brought about by 'les jeunes équipes'. He was thinking of a sort of democratic corporatism.⁴¹

Given the differences in traditions and aims of the various components of the centre right there was much room for misunderstanding. This is illustrated by a quarrel provoked by Weitz's resignation from the Mascaraud Committee. The immediate cause was a speech by Schulz, who had not only urged Republicans to defend the 'idée laïque' and freedom of trade, but also to be on their guard against 'le danger pressant de la nouvelle féodalité qui s'élève sur le pavois porté par les grands trusts, les cartels et la haute finance'.⁴² On the face of it there is little here to antagonize a Protestant and moderate reformist like Weitz. But Weitz claimed that as leader of both the *Alliance démocratique* and

représentant de la mécanique, la plus démocratique des industries, j'ai eu en son temps aussi, mieux qu'un membre de cette Fabrique lyonnaise qui a élevé sa prospérité sur l'exploitation des tisseurs à façon et des manipulateurs des tissus, le droit de dénoncer les méfaits de cette féodalité industrielle qu'elle représente encore et que je travaille tous les jours à démolir.

Les réalisations sociales que j'ai poursuivi, tant pour mon compte que pour l'industrie qui m'a fait l'honneur de me placer à sa tête, les contrats que j'ai négocié avec nos ouvriers, me donnaient aussi, mieux qu'un patron qui n'a même pas un ouvrier et qui n'est pas adhérent à nos caisses d'assurances sociales, quelque titre à défendre une politique pour laque-

38 *Bulletin mensuel du commerce, de l'industrie et de l'agriculture*, January-March, 1928.

39 CRCCCL, 1929, p. 697.

40 *Nouveau journal*, 7-7-1928.

41 *Nouveau journal*, 26-4-1928.

42 BMCIA, January/March, 1928.

lle, par tradition de ma race alsacienne, par conviction de ma conscience personnelle, j'ai depuis vingt ans prêché l'exemple.⁴³

Weitz's outburst provoked a reply from Etienne Fougère and Paul Charbin, who in their capacities respectively as honorary and current Presidents of the SFS asked why Weitz had to cite 'injurious and false opinions about the greatest of Lyonnais industries of which the supremacy in Lyon has always been so difficult for him to accept?'⁴⁴

This incident is revealing of the multiple conflicts within the Lyonnais bourgeoisie and more particularly within the centre right. Businessmen nourished in the same Republican tradition were driven apart by the way in which economic and ideological issues were related in their minds. Thus Weitz felt that a representative of the *fabrique* had no right to lay claim to the leadership of progressive employers, for he identified the industry as a whole with Catholicism, anti-Republicanism and social reaction. The result was that Weitz quarreled with Etienne Fougère, whose economic views were similar to his own, and with Schulz whose anti-clericalism he shared, but whose lack of sympathy with genuine social reform he condemned.

It is hardly surprising then that the lay centre right hardly played a effective role in the conflicts precipitated by conservative reformism. It was held together only by a commitment to republican democracy, or in other words by an agreed framework for resolving differences. In the late nineteenth century this had been sufficient to make liberal republicanism an effective political force. But by the late 1920s there were hard choices to be made over economic issues, partly because of the greater importance of interest groups in politics. Furthermore, liberalism was losing its effectiveness as a means of integrating a popular constituency into the right.

Christian democracy and Tardieu

More coherent support for conservative reformism came from the Catholic moderate right. More precisely, there was a sort of reformist cartel consisting of Peissel, the Federation left, the PDP and CFTC. Within this cartel can be detected both pressure from the rank and file of the right and the efforts of notables like Peissel to create a new conservative consensus.

Only in times of extreme crisis did the CFTC pronounce in favour of an individual ministry. Hence backing for Poincaré in 1926. But support for Poincaré was conditional upon the demand that workers alone should not bear the burden of deflation, and that the government commit itself to social reform.⁴⁵ As we saw in Chapter four the dominant wing in the CFTC was committed to economic advance, industri-

⁴³ *Nouvelliste*, 5-3-1928.

⁴⁴ *Le Nouvelliste*, 6-3-1928.

⁴⁵ *La voix sociale*, August/September, 1926.

alization and reform. Above all the CFTC supported social insurance. The idea that social insurance should be controlled by mutual aid societies was rejected: 'les assurances faites par l'industrie, le commerce ou les administrations privées [sont] un moyen de réduire nos salaires de base et de rogner notre liberté'.⁴⁶ In accordance with its corporatist doctrine the CFTC would have preferred 'truly professional' control of social insurance. But rather than see employers pervert this idea, they accepted the government's statist approach.⁴⁷

More attentive to the broader aims of Tardieu's policy was the PDP. In March 1930 it approved Tardieu's reforming second administration, which it was hoped would ensure the passage of the budget and Social Insurance Law, and continue to search for international peace.⁴⁸ In particular the party emphasised foreign policy, without forgetting the relationship between international pacification and prosperity.⁴⁹ Defense of the League of Nations was, of course, a special concern of the Papacy. Among its members the PDP in the Rhône counted a translator at the headquarters of the League in Geneva.

In some respects the PDP parted company with Tardieu. There is a petty bourgeois tone to its ideas. Federal president Jacques Turret summarized the three principles of the party as individual liberty, individual property and abolition of privileges. PDP discourse often resembled that of the Radicals. But the language in which it was expressed did not. Although like Tardieu the PDP believed in religious pacification,⁵⁰ its reformism was expressed in the vocabulary of social Catholicism. The call, for example, for 'une République vraiment nationale, ordonnée et réformatrice',⁵¹ could have been taken from the propaganda of the Federation. Not surprisingly therefore, the natural allies of the PDP, the reformists in the SFIO, CGT and Radical Party, tended to dismiss it as clerical and reactionary. For this reason, the PDP itself was unlikely to achieve very much. But the ideas of the PDP were influential to the extent that they had penetrated the progressive wing of the Federation.

In this respect the key figures were Laurent Bonnevey, and above all François Peissel.⁵² In his youth a Catholic trades unionist, Peissel had much in common with the PDP. He was engaged in principle to abrogate the lay laws, but he regarded the notion of combat on that terrain as a trap set by the left.⁵³ He preferred a consensus around economic prosperity rather than religion. His ideas on social reform were very

46 *La voix sociale*, 15-7-1923. Some in the CFTC were even hostile to the notion of a special optional regime for agriculture (*La voix sociale*, November, 1929, resolution of the Syndicat des cheminots).

47 *La voix sociale*, December, 1928, (Georges Forestier).

48 *Nouveau Journal*, 9-3-1930.

49 *Nouveau Journal*, 31-5-1931: in 1931 the PDP demanded 'sécurité de la territoire, en attendant que la Société des nations et la fédération économique et politique des états d'Europe garantissent à tous la paix'.

50 *Nouveau Journal*, 7-1-1928, 31-5-1931.

51 *Nouveau Journal*, 31-5-1931.

52 Peissel and Bonnevey collaborated politically throughout the whole of the period. In 1926 Peissel, as President of the Federation in the Rhône, had managed to persuade Marin not to expel Bonnevey from the Federation. See 317 AP 76, Peissel to Marin, 18-5-1926; Marin to Peissel, 185-1926.

53 *Nouveau Journal*, 24-5-1928.

advanced for a member of the Federation. He proposed a system of binding conciliation and arbitration in industrial disputes and collaboration with the CGT as a means of drawing it into the system.⁵⁴ Social Insurance was seen as making up for the inadequacies of mutual aid societies.⁵⁵ Peissel also favoured the 'Locarno spirit' in foreign affairs.⁵⁶ Where Peissel differed from the PDP was in a greater stress on anti-socialism, financial orthodoxy (in theory at least) and national defence.

Peissel's interventions in the crisis of the Federation show that he perceived links between foreign and other aspects of government policy. Shortly after Marin's vote against ratification, Peissel laid out his views in a letter to Jean Guiter. He argued that what was really at stake was the question of whether the Federation was a party of government or opposition. Electoral victory had given the right a unique chance. Freed from dependence on the Radicals it was possible to 'assainir l'Ecole publique en y faisant rentrer l'esprit nationale, pratiquer une politique de dégrèvements financiers, d'amortissement de notre dette perpétuelle, permettant en 1932 les conversions nécessaires, organiser la défense de nos frontières, mettre en route les Assurances Sociales, continuer à s'appuyer sur la confiance envers les destinées de notre Pays en pratiquant une politique de paix intérieure, sauvegarder l'ordre public contre les menées anti-sociales des révolutionnaires'. To convince Marin, Peissel accentuated the right wing side of his programme.⁵⁷ But the main point is that Peissel saw a connection between ratification and the remodelling of France. It is not simply that he valued social order more than national security, as Jeanneney would have it. It is also significant that Peissel should oppose government proposals for secondary education on the grounds that the present system of private scholarships was adequate. Peissel was no more capable of setting aside old rancours than any other conservative. This can be seen more clearly in the opposition to conservative reform.

The reaction against conservative reformism

Victor Perret's wing of the Federation consisted of an alliance of those hostile to conservative reformism.⁵⁸ They included certain aristocratic landowners, often denied a voice in the USE their fathers had helped to found, the heads of family businesses, especially in the 'traditional' sectors of the economy; doctors worried by the prospect of becoming *fonctionnaires* and white collar workers, many of whom were excluded from the benefits of the law.⁵⁹ Also hostile to Tardieu, from the point of view of its

54 Nouveau Journal, 5-3-1929. Many in the Federation regarded the CGT as illegal.

55 Nouveau Journal, 24-3-1929.

56 Nouveau Journal, 14-12-1929.

57 317 AP 73, Peissel to Guiter, 6-9-1929. It is interesting to note that Peissel sees the ancestors of the Federation in the Moral Order period, not in the moderate Republicanism of the Opportunists.

58 *Voix sociale*, June, 1928, identified a coalition of big farmers, certain representatives of industry and commerce, the *Ligue des Patriotes*, doctors and the communists against social insurance.

59 Essentially the wing of the CFCT represented by Gruffaz. See, for example his views on revaluation of the Franc. Against the partisans of modernization he evoked 'les craintes justifiées de nos syndiqués, employés, ouvriers de la région lyonnais qui en se privent des satisfactions les plus légitimes, ont pu et su réaliser quelques économies' (*La voix sociale*, June, 1928).

peculiar combination of Orleanist liberalism and elitism with Catholic integristism, was the *Nouvelliste*.

Warning against the possibility that Federation sympathisers might surrender to the mystique of Tardieu, just as they had to Clemenceau and Poincaré, Perret made clear his backing for Louis Marin at the National Council of the Federation in September 1929. He rejected the demands of 'les éléments militants' that the Federation should make clear its support for the current Briand government.⁶⁰ Perret argued that the Federation could give no such guarantee to a ministry responsible for 'financial demagoguery', social insurance, a cowardly foreign policy, and reform of secondary education. He went on to condemn the unhealthy influence of the party's parliamentarians and the tendentious influence of the press, which in turn was in the pay of government and business.⁶¹ Foreign policy was only part of the question.

It is possible to see the coming together of three tensions.⁶² First, an institutional question: Perret appealed to a new kind of pseudo-democratic activism against the old style notable politics symbolised by 'certain deputies'. Second, social conflict: Perret spoke for sections of the ruling class and petty bourgeoisie who were dismayed by the general evolution of the economy and the particular evolution of the government policy. Third, ideological conflict. Perret claimed to represent a national opposition to an establishment which had failed in its mission. These three elements give meaning to Perret's intention to renovate France with the help of 'popular elements' rather than the 'bourgeoisie en place'.⁶³

Like Tardieu, Perret's goal was to remake the French bourgeoisie and to re-define its relations with the rest of society, ultimately creating a stable conservative majority. Having dealt in the previous chapter with organization, the ideological aspect of Perret's strategy will be the subject of this section. In an interview marking his accession to the Presidency of the Federation in the Rhône in 1931 Perret said 'L'expérience de douze ans m'a montré qu'il est possible d'attirer à nous beaucoup de sympathisants et d'hésitants en essayant de faire disparaître peu à peu la politique pure pour transporter les débats sur le terrain économique par l'étude de l'organisation de travail, de la production, de la corporation'.⁶⁴

Take first his politics. Perret's desire to unify the right by fighting on economic ground was nothing new. This had been the aim of Motte and Aynard in the pre-war Federation and since then of Tardieu. Party politics would be laid aside in the

60 A few weeks later the votes of Marin and his friends ensured Briand's fall, thereby throwing the Federation into confusion. Jeanneney, *De Wendel*, pp. 424-428, argues that Marin et. al. had not really wanted to overthrow Briand, but were taken by surprise by the left's opposition to him. Perret's intervention shows that overthrow had been on the agenda before the event.

61 317 AP 73, minutes of Conseil nationale, 28-9-1929.

62 For this argument I have drawn upon Geoff Eley, 'Conservatives and Radical Nationalists in Germany: the production of fascist potentials, 1912 to 1928', in M Blinkhorn (ed.), *Fascists and Conservatives: The Radical Right and the Establishment in Twentieth Century Europe*, London, 1990, pp. 50-70.

63 317 AP 73, minutes of Conseil national, 28-9-1929.

64 *Le Nouvelliste*, 23-12-1931.

interests of a common defence of private property and the general economic interest. Another portrait of Perret associates involvement in business with an ability to stand above party politics.⁶⁵ The assumption is that businessmen are involved in the resolution of purely practical problems, free from the shackles of ideology, and that their interest is identical with the general good.

This meant overcoming the clerical/anticlerical divisions in the right, and convincing Radical voters that their real interest lay in defending private property, not in joining the socialists in an anti-capitalist and anti-clerical alliance. Whereas Tardieu sought to win over the Radicals through public works, prosperity and neutrality on the religious question, Perret's strategy was more negative. He was contemptuous of those who disguised themselves as leftists in a vain attempt to win Radical sympathies.⁶⁶ As Bosse-Platière put it, the Radicals had simply to understand that the only meaningful conflict was between the Federation and the SFIO.⁶⁷ The underlying assumption was that peasants and small businessmen voted for the Radicals only because they had been duped. All the right had to do was to lay before them the economic verities. The only concession to Radical ideological sensibilities was to stress the Republicanism of the Federation.⁶⁸ Bosse-Platière was frequently mocked in the *Action française* press for his fear of being taken for a royalist.

The economic truth according to Perret owed something to the liberal tradition. He was often presented as an heroic individual struggling against adversity in both economic and political life: 'Aide-toi, le ciel t'aidera pourrait servir de devise à cette existence mouvementée et courageuse qui a de quoi tenter un romancier'. It was said that Perret had been sent to work as a weaver because of the collapse of the family firm, but that through hard work he had been able to rebuild the family fortune.⁶⁹ Perret was held to personify self-reliance, hard work and social mobility. The first issue of *L'Union républicaine* adds to this liberalism an 'absolute respect for property', liberty of conscience teaching, press and association. Government interference in the economy, high taxes and unbalanced budgets were an anathema to Perret. Even in the depths of the depression, when so many were turning to corporatism, Perret protested 'Nous sommes de la classe des libéraux impénitents; nous croyons que la liberté du commerce et des échanges, la liberté des initiatives dans tous les domaines, corre-

65 'Cet homme vice président du syndicat de la soierie de Lyon, conseiller de commerce extérieure de la France, n'a que peu de goût pour la politique proprement dite'. Cutting from *Gringoire*, undated, in 317 AP 77/8. The previously quoted interview also stresses Perret's Vice-presidency of the SFS.

66 Perret in *Reveil du Beaujolais*, 24-3-1931.

67 *L'Union républicaine*, 19-6-1932.

68 *L'Union républicaine*, 1-5-1932. Bosse-Platière wrote: 'Le Beaujolais est profondément républicain de conviction. Je partage, sans aucune réserve, ses sentiments'.

69 Cutting from *Gringoire*, 317 AP 77/8. This story could not be confirmed. It was taken up by the PPF among others.

spondent mieux aux facultés natives de notre peuple'.⁷⁰ Neither did Perret ever consider that economic or technological progress could be halted.⁷¹

Yet Perret's economic views were ambiguous. The influence of the Legitimist tradition, transmitted via the ALP can be seen in the above-quoted interview, where Perret states the need to study the organization of work, production and the corporation.⁷² He called for mixed employer-worker syndicates and for the representation of social forces in parliament.⁷³ We have, however, to wait until the regular appearance of *L'Union républicaine* in 1932 to understand precisely what is meant by corporatism:

Depuis que le monde est monde, le bonheur vrai ne peut exister sans l'éducation de la famille, l'instruction choisie et dirigée par elle, le travail consciencieux, l'effort persévérant, le respect des anciens, de la hiérarchie, de la tradition, l'organisation corporative de la profession, la discipline consentie, le contentement de son sort sans envie ou ambition démesurée, l'espérance réfléchie de la réussite progressive et méritée, la bonté envers les malheureux, l'amour de son foyer, de sa Patrie et la croyance qui conditionne tout.⁷⁴

This is very different from Edouard Aynard's view of an elite constantly renewed by social mobility. There is a natural social order ordained by God and transmitted in the form of tradition to each generation. Respect for its values is learned in the family, the basic unit in a hierarchy which also comprises profession, generation and at the summit the nation.

Perret's views owed much to the conditions of his own branch of the silk industry. What he understood by corporatism was essentially the protection of skilled labour. He pursued this goal in the *Chambre des métiers de la soie*, of which he was Director. Perret was especially interested in training young women to embroider the fine silks produced by his own firm. When he called for the return of women to the home he did not have in mind the bourgeois ideal of the non-working woman. On the contrary, return to the family workshop would permit the wife to work alongside husband and children, thereby reconciling family and professional duties.⁷⁵ In his classes young women were to be educated in the history of embroidery, the goals of their industry, the problem of foreign competition, and the need for intelligent collaboration between employers and unions. This would accomplish the task of 'moralization' and social pacification.⁷⁶

In sum, the Federation's corporatism was fairly limited. It amounted to little more than paternalist control of labour and protection of certain endangered crafts.

⁷⁰ *L'Union républicaine*, 17-2-1935.

⁷¹ *L'Union républicaine*, 18-3-1934: He used the centenary of Jacquard's death to state that 'it is impossible to limit or put a stop to progress in any of its forms... One could not with impunity destroy productive capacity of any sort as long as the majority of human beings lacked everything'.

⁷² See page 179.

⁷³ *Nouvelliste*, 12-1-1929; *L'Union républicaine* 17-4-1931.

⁷⁴ *L'Union républicaine*, 24-7-1932.

⁷⁵ *L'Union républicaine*, 8-12-1935. Perret on the subject of female suffrage: 'Nous croyons par exemple, que les ateliers familiaux, le retour général à l'artisanat, seront des formules d'avenir qui arrachant la femme à l'usine démodée et fermée, la maintiendra à son foyer, travaillant avec son mari et ses enfants, tout en vaquant aux soins de ménage'. See also *L'Union républicaine*, 17-7-1932.

⁷⁶ *L'Union républicaine*, 9-10-1932.

Nonetheless, its incompatibility with the liberal principles simultaneously evoked by Perret is plain, especially as he spoke of the desirability of a return to artisan production, at least for those industries where mass production was not essential.⁷⁷ Perret never really gave doctrinal consistency to his views, though he sometimes spoke as if the laws of supply and demand would function properly only if businessmen and others moderated their desire for material gain in the interests of the common good. In other words there is a 'natural' level of demand, which businessmen ignore only at great risk. It is of course unrealistic to expect logical consistency in an ideology. Ambiguity is precisely what gives it integrative effectiveness. In this case it integrated by reconciling corporatism with the liberal tradition of Lyon.

Along with his desire to remake France in the image of the silk braid and embroidery industry, Perret's views were shaped by a certain view of religion. His Catholicism was expressed with reserve, thanks to his desire to fight on economic terrain. Apart from those occasions when the Church was directly attacked, it can be detected more in his language than in the narrowly political content of what he said. For this reason it is interesting to look at the hierarchy's views on the social insurance question.

For Cardinal Maurin the interests of religion were at stake. Certain influential persons intended to use social insurance to de-Christianize France. The Church could not allow an improvement in the material well-being of the workers to harm their spiritual interests. A director of a communal insurance fund, who might even be a teacher, would wield enormous power. The faithful must therefore set up their own funds. A Catholic employee of such a *caisse*, thanks to his contacts with families at times of crisis, would be able to provide information to the priest.⁷⁸ Maurin did, not, however, distinguish religious from social issues, for he also argued that mutualized social insurance would promote entente between bosses and workers.⁷⁹

In its statements on social insurance the Church defended a particular conception of society. It coincided with the views of certain of the elites. More particularly, it coincided with Victor Perret's views as an employer and President of the Federation, a party dependent for contact with the masses upon Catholic notables and the Church. Perret must be seen as an individual inserted into overlapping networks—religious, political and economic.

The third component of Perret's ideology was his nationalism. Again, nationalism cannot be reduced to economic or any other interest. The slaughter of the

77 317 AP 82/3. In 1934 Perret again called for a return to family workshops for all but certain concerns. But he admitted that realization would be complex and difficult.

78 *Semaine religieuse*, 19-1-1929.

79 *Semaine religieuse*, 22-3-1929: 'Il ne m'aurait pas déplu que, pour les assurances sociales comme cela s'est heureusement produit il y a quelques années pour les charges de famille et de compensation, l'initiative vint des patrons eux-mêmes ou que, tout aux moins, le principe de l'obligation légalement établi, on confiât à la profession elle-même le soin de s'organiser au moyen d'une entente entre patrons et ouvriers. Le métier forme bien une grande famille et il n'y a rien de beau comme l'accord et la collaboration des classes sur le terrain sociale'.

trenches was a formative experience for pacifists and supporters of national defence alike. This, should not, however, prevent us from seeing that nationalism possessed an integrative function. For Perret the nation was the supreme focus of loyalty beyond family and profession. Bosse-Platière's mystical definition of the nation as an intangible link between individuals and classes brings this out.⁸⁰ We have here the familiar right wing view that political divisions are artificial constructs which divide a fundamentally united people, visible, for example, in the fraternity of the trenches.

Aside from the rather obvious point, Perret's nationalism possessed an oppositional character. Commenting on the arrival in power of Hitler, Perret asked whether our 'ostriches' in Parliament would finally comprehend? He went on to quote Kipling: 'my sons are dead because our leaders lied'.⁸¹ On the contrary his nationalism contests the legitimacy of those who believed the national interest to demand rapprochement with Germany. The same challenge is implicit in the appeal to 'the people' against the 'bourgeoisie en place'. The nationalism of the Federation was an intervention in a contested ideological terrain.⁸²

Perret's appeal to the nation has to be seen in connection with a certain pseudo-egalitarianism. This did not mean the egalitarianism of the Republic: Bosse-Platière rejected the notion that the nation was a sum of material interests, referring instead to the French as a 'race'.⁸³ Alexandre La Batie saw the hierarchical organization of the army as analogous to the democracy from which it emanated. The army was an inter-class organization which attenuated the social inequalities of a regime which 'claims to be founded on equality of rights and duties'. What La Batie means by equality is common submission to discipline. Thus military service provided the unity which had once been derived from the monarchy.⁸⁴

In its nationalism, pseudo-egalitarianism and anti-elitism the Federation showed its opposition to the status quo. Popular legitimacy is, of course, evoked in a symbolic sense. For all that Perret trumpeted the democratic basis of the reorganised Federation, it remained a hybrid of old style notable and more modern forms of political involvement. Nationalist leagues were to be kept in a subordinate position. Neither did the Federation offer much in the way of social reform. Social questions were rarely discussed in the party press.⁸⁵ Certainly the Federation claimed to accept the social doctrine of the Church. The first issue of *L'Union républicaine* called for 'practical reforms which would profit the mass of workers', but gave no further de-

80 *L'Union républicaine*, 14-4-1935: [In nationalism] 'nous nous découvrons une unité de vue avec des gens dont nous nous pensions séparés par des barrières infranchissables et dont nous découvrons qu'ils ont avec nous des attaches et une âme commune'.

81 *L'Union républicaine*, 21-5-1933.

82 E. Laclau, 'Fascist Ideology', in *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*. My argument draws heavily on G. Eley, *Reshaping the German Right*, Yale, 1980, chapter 5.

83 *L'Union républicaine*, 14-4-1935.

84 *L'Union républicaine*, 29-7-1934.

85 *L'Union républicaine*, 1-1-1933.

tails.⁸⁶ Rather, populism should be seen as an expression of the discontent of certain sections of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie at the direction of government policy, a discontent in which it is difficult to disentangle religious, economic and social concerns. Rather than overthrow of the regime, Perret's goal was a parliamentary alliance with the Radicals in a subordinate position.⁸⁷

Yet populism had an importance in its own right. It opened an organizational and ideological space in which anti-parliamentary leagues could operate. Victor Perret's challenge to the notables was to rebound against him. His own committees were penetrated by extremists.⁸⁸ For the time being, however, the populism of the Federation neutralized the far right. This is perhaps why neither the *Fédération des contribuables* nor *Défense paysan* were able to establish themselves in the Rhône in this period. Elsewhere they had formed the cutting edge of opposition to reform.

The difference in the Rhône was that a conservative and Catholic bourgeoisie, with considerable organizational resources at its disposal in the parishes, was able to take the lead in opposition to Tardieu. This in turn led to the re-surfacing of the Legitimist and integrist strand in the Lyonnais right, though altered by the contact of royalism with the pre-war radical right. This is why Laurent Bonnevey identified Marin and his supporters with the *Chambre introuvable*, Charles X and the Comte de Chambord.⁸⁹

Perret's Victory

At first, Perret's views had only a limited resonance outside of the circles already referred to. A motion submitted to the National Council in October 1929 reflected Peissel's position in its entirety. The motion urged that the Federation refrain from destabilising the majority of 1928.⁹⁰ Hostility to Marin reached a peak after he had participated in the overthrow of Briand in October, 1929. Perret defended Marin in public debates with Peissel.⁹¹ But in private even he was doubtful. 'Hundreds' of subscriptions to *La Nation* were cancelled. Marin's partisans in Lyon dared not utter his name. The great majority of naive militants, said Perret, took the word of those whose election they had made possible. Perret advised Marin to make a tactical withdrawal. Otherwise, if Marin lost the Presidency Perret himself would have had to submit to

86 *L'Union républicaine*, 15-5-1931. For one militant this was because the reforms in the party programme were not to be used for demagogic purposes.

87 The is shown by prominence given to parliamentary news in *L'Union républicain*.

88 For example the JP member and future *Croix de Feu* leader Louis Marchal was able to replace a Federation member as candidate in the 7th arrondissement in the 1928 general election, and stand on an anti-parliamentarian platform.

89 317 AP 76, Bonnevey article in *La Nation*.

90 317 AP 73, Peissel to Marin, 5-10-1929. It called for defence of French interests, international understanding, and 'une large politique d'ententes économiques et douanières, préface indispensable à une plus grande collaboration européen'. In domestic policy it called for improvement and implementation of the Social Insurance Act on the date fixed by the law, rather than give in to business demands for staged introduction. Peissel nevertheless, urged Marin to avoid discussion at the forthcoming National Council in order to present a united front.

91 *Nouveau Journal*, 14-12-1929.

the will of the majority in Lyon.⁹² The weakness of Perret's position is shown by the fact that in January 1930 he pledged his support for the new Tardieu cabinet, even though Briand remained a member of it.⁹³ Some months later, to Perret's horror deputy Jean-Baptiste Delorme resigned from the Federation.⁹⁴

Yet by mid-1931 the tide was turning. Local sections began to vote motions in support of Marin.⁹⁵ Five months later Peissel gave up the Presidency of the Rhône Federation to Perret, ostensibly because of pressure of work.⁹⁶ The new balance of forces is illustrated by three disputes which occurred in 1931 and 1932.

The first was the refusal of Peissel and Sallès to sit with the Federation's parliamentary group after the elections of 1932. For Perret this was a betrayal of the Federation and its militants.⁹⁷ Peissel's defence of the autonomy of deputies was insufficient to prevent the *Comité directeur*, presided by Perret himself, from banning all assistance to Sallès and Peissel as long as they remained in the dissident group.⁹⁸ The Federation stopped short of expulsion.⁹⁹ At least two Committee members supported Sallès and Peissel, criticising the rightwards turn of the Federation.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, Perret's enhanced influence in the Federation is unmistakable. And after 1932 Peissel shifted rapidly towards the right, although he did not completely lose touch with the Federation left. Sallès had in any case been close to Perret, supporting Peissel only for tactical reasons.

The second conflict took place in the Beaujolais, part of a long struggle between the business notables of Villefranche and the rural militants represented by Alexandre Bosse-Platière. In 1931 the former had been able to sabotage the creation of a Federation youth group in Villefranche. Bosse-Platière meanwhile was evicted from his post as political editor of the local journal, the *Reveil du Beaujolais*.¹⁰¹ Surprisingly, in 1932 Bosse-Platière was selected by the *Union des républicains*, an independent body, to carry the flag of the right in the elections of 1932. Yet he found himself faced by a dissident candidate, the Villefranche businessman Ernest Planche.¹⁰² In the course of the campaign even Bosse-Platière's own committee deserted him. In the election Planche outdistanced his conservative rival, forcing Bosse-

92 317 AP 73, Perret to Marin, 23-12-1929. Marin, a touchy character, appears to have taken this advice badly, for he refused to keep up his correspondence with Perret.

93 *Le Nouvelliste*, 18-1-1930.

94 Delorme's decision might have owed something to the fact that he had been elected only because of the division of the opposition. If he was to be re-elected he would need Radical votes.

95 *Le Nouvelliste*, 27-6-1931. The most important was that of the Central Committee of Lyon sections in July 1931. Another example is a motion from the 6th arrondissement, reprinted in *Le Nouvelliste*.

96 *Nouveau journal*, 20-12-1931.

97 *L'Union républicaine*, 26-6-1932.

98 *L'Union républicaine*, 17-7-1932; 317 AP 73, Perret to Marin, 10-6-1932.

99 317 AP 73, A Damaz to Guiter, 22-6-1932: 'tout en étant très sévère pour l'acte accompli [...] je suis dans ce que je crois être l'intérêt de la Fédération républicaine, contre le principe d'exclusions'.

100 317 AP 73, Charbin to Guiter, 25-6-1932. One, Alexandre Charbin wrote 'voici 16 Parlementaires qui sont menacés des foudres des éléments intransigeants de la Fédération républicaine, dont l'évolution vers l'extrême droite est par trop sensible depuis quelques années'. The other opponent of sanctions was Julien Riboud.

101 ADR Cour de Justice de Lyon, report of 1945.

102 *Reveil du Beaujolais*, 16-3-1932; *L'Union républicaine*, 26-6-1932.

Platière's withdrawal. Yet soon after the election Bosse-Platière was able to create a section of the Federation in the constituency. In September 1933 the old *Union des républicains* dissolved itself and ceded its property to the Federation.¹⁰³

The third conflict related to control of the press. Thanks to the acquired position of the *Nouvelliste* it had always been difficult for moderates to get their views across. Several attempts to set up a rival had failed. The most recent was the *Nouveau journal*, which had been created in 1924. According to managing director Marius Gonin, it was 'le seul [journal lyonnais] à se tenir franchement dans la ligne du ministère [Tardieu]'.¹⁰⁴ Although Victor Perret was a member, the board was heavily weighted towards the left Federation and centre right: François Peissel and Etienne Fougère were both members.¹⁰⁵ In spite of the backing of several wealthy industrialists the *Nouveau journal's* circulation of 40,000 was thirty per cent too low to cover its costs.¹⁰⁶ By the spring of 1931, with the arrival of the economic crisis, the situation of the *Nouveau journal* was critical.¹⁰⁷ Negotiations with press magnates Pierre Laval and Raymond Patenôtre took place, but the outcome was that the *Nouvelliste* took over the paper in December.¹⁰⁸ The *Nouveau journal* became in effect the *Nouvelliste* with a different editorial. A few months before a general election the *Nouvelliste* was 'more than ever master of the political battle field'.¹⁰⁹

From the point of view of the moderate right the timing could not have been worse, for in November 1931 Pierre Laval had sold *Lyon républicain* to the Radical Raymond Patenôtre, who immediately ceased to insert conservative communiqués.¹¹⁰ Moderates, to the disgust of Peissel, Cozon and Gonin, were left only with the uninspiring evening paper *Salut public*.¹¹¹ In a time of economic hardship *Salut public's* bourgeois clientele, seeing it as a luxury, tended to stop buying it.¹¹² To compound the difficulties of the moderates the Federation began to publish *L'Union républicaine* in April 1932. The party's new journal was personally owned by Victor Perret. It did not open up its columns to his rivals.

103 *L'Union républicaine*, 20-11-1932, 11-9-1932, 10-9-1933.

104 *Fonds Gonin* 3, report of Marius Gonin, 6-11-1930.

105 *Fonds Gonin* 3, report of 19-12-1925. Also on the board were Federation moderates like Alexandre Charbin and Lucien Cozon.

106 *Fonds Gonin* 3, report of November, 1929. It lacked the capital to invest in equipment necessary to produce a paper of the highest quality; advertisers were reluctant to commit themselves to a paper with an apparently bleak future. Several appeals were made to industrialists—on one occasion Charles Gillet gave no less than 400,000 francs.

107 *Fonds Gonin* 3, Gonin report, 13-4-1931.

108 *Fonds Gonin* 3, for details see Falaize to Gonin, 7-12-31, Cozon to Gonin 8-4-1932 and 19-3-1932.

109 *Fonds Gonin*, Falaize to Gonin, 7-12-31.

110 *Fonds Gonin*, Cozon report, 19-3-1932: as Lucien Cozon, a Federation moderate, put it: 'La caractéristique présente de la presse du matin à Lyon—par suite de l'évolution simultanée, et en sens contraire, du *Nouveau journal* et du *Lyon républicain*—est Presse de droite, Presse de gauche, Rien au centre'. See also Fred Kupferman, *Laval, 1883-1945*, Paris, 1987, pp. 65-9.

111 It enjoyed the dubious reputation of being a *Lyonnais Journal des débats*—'peu lu et ne [faisant] pas ses frais'.

112 *Fonds Gonin*, Gonin report, undated, ?1931: Cozon attempted to persuade Humbert Isaac, managing director of *Salut public* to launch a morning paper, but he was reluctant to take the risk (Cozon to Gonin, 6-1-1932, H. Isaac to Cozon, 7-2-1932).

The reasons for Perret's victory are those evoked at the beginning of the chapter to account for the disappointments of Tardieu: economic crisis and the resurgence of international tension.¹¹³ The victory of the Cartel in 1932 also explains a shift to the right. There are also local factors to be taken into account. Perret's reorganization of the Federation had perhaps begun to bear fruit. François Peissel (like J-B. Delorme) was in a weak position, representing an essentially rural constituency which in the end gained very little from reform. Hence his shift to the right and the attraction of peasant constituents like Parrel to Victor Perret. Bonnevey, in a similar position, reacted rather differently, moving further to the left, forming closer links with the PDP and encroaching on the ground of the Radicals, to the horror of many of his supporters.

The chronic weakness and division of the lay centre right in Lyon must also be taken into account. What is more, once the effects of the economic crisis began to be felt even Edmund Weitz began to back away from reform. In a report to the Chamber of Commerce of 1930 Weitz called for a halt to reform.¹¹⁴ After 1930 he played no visible political role, though he continued to struggle against the 'silk establishment' in the Chamber of Commerce until at least 1934. One he became Deputy of the Loire in 1928, Etienne Fougère, also played a less active role in Lyon. Guy Aroud, who retained his progressive views, deserted to the Radical-Socialists, while continuing to speak in *Lyon républicain* for the engineering industry. The Alliance adapted only with difficulty to the effacement of Weitz and Fougère. A new departmental leadership was installed in January 1931 under Dr. Augros. But in subsequent years the Alliance was more than ever riven by faction fighting.¹¹⁵

Conclusion

Both André Tardieu and Victor Perret set out to unite the right by asserting the primacy of economic interest. Clearly both failed, for the right was defeated in 1932 both nationally and in Lyon where it lost one of its three seats.¹¹⁶ It is conceivable that Perret's establishment of control over the Federation contributed to the enormous Radical gains of that year. Certainly the vote for the centre right increased substantially, though this was partly due to the dissidence of J-B. Delorme who stood for the Alliance rather than the Federation which had backed him in 1928.

Perret's purpose was subverted by the religious question. Where politicians muted their Catholicism, the *Nouvelliste*, probably read by most of his supporters, re-

¹¹³ See page 168.

¹¹⁴ CRCCCL, 1930, p.624: 'La loi sur les Assurances sociales n'est pas encore intégré dans l'économie industrielle que le législateur nous menace de nouvelles dépenses: congés payés, [...] L'extension de la législation des maladies professionnelles à la silicose et à certains tuberculoses, malgré l'incertitude des diagnostics ouvrant la porte à tous les abus [...]'.
¹¹⁵ Gric, op. cit., p. 251.

¹¹⁶ That of J-B. Delorme, who held Givors.

remained committed to the re-Christianization of France.¹¹⁷ Perret's organizational reliance upon the Church limited the Federation's ability to become a genuine mass party. It also made the Federation vulnerable to the influence of the social Catholicism of the CFTC and JAC. In any case Perret himself was unable to separate politics, economics and religion. Consequently his Catholicism was betrayed in the vocabulary used to explain problems which he perceived to be merely technical. For people brought up in the Radical tradition Catholicism was in turn inseparable from the economic interests of the 'industrial feudalism'.

Related to this point is that even in narrowly economic terms, Perret's views were particular. We have seen that they had a very specific appeal to groups which were fearful of the development of a mass production economy, just as Perret himself was. In the end, the Federation failed in its effort to remake the right because it was incapable of producing a platform capable of transcending class and religious boundaries. Perret, like Tardieu, came to grief on the two great issues which divided the French bourgeoisie: attitude to industrialization and the religious question. It may have appeared after the elections of 1932 that conservatives were united around Perret's hardline position. But the economic crisis showed that this was not the case.

¹¹⁷ *Le Nouvelliste*, 1-1-1929.

Chapter eight

The parliamentary right and the economic crisis

When business in the Rhône began to feel the full effects of the slump in 1930 and 1931 the right was already in crisis. The elites were divided; they faced difficulties in dealing with the reformist aspirations of a part of their rank and file and were heading for electoral disaster. It is also possible to detect a nascent authoritarianism in the populism of Victor Perret. Unity of the right was apparently restored by increasing sympathy for Perret's hard-line position, especially after the return of the Cartel in 1932, and by the campaign for deflation.

Yet economic crisis aggravated existing tensions and created new ones. There was a mobilization of the lower middle class. The JAC expanded. The CFTC opposed deflation and was attracted to aspects of the Popular Front programme. Small business, mainly Radical in sympathy, mobilized in favour of tax cuts, questioned the legitimacy of the Chamber of Commerce, and began to turn to the far right. Meanwhile, there was a realignment within big business. Faced with terminal crisis the unity of the silk interest, already strained, collapsed completely. Large firms, whose ambiguous attitude to social reform and state intervention has been noted, moved towards corporatism. In so doing the gap between silk and big engineering firms narrowed. One consequence was to reinforce the impression that the Chamber of Commerce was merely a tool in the hands big business, in which the voice of medium and small firms was never heard.

These problems were compounded by the activation of an enormous number of pressure groups. From 1931 newspapers were filled with press releases from such groups. They reveal an immense range of conflicts which it would be tedious to enumerate—landlords against tenants, small millers against large, consumers against tradesmen, veterans against the Ministry of Pensions—to name but a few. At the same time professional groups, from students to market gardeners, became concerned with restricting access to their fields of activity.

As for the parties, the centre right remained isolated from the masses and riven by faction fighting; the Federation and PDP took on the appearance of lobbies for special interests—merchant-manufacturers and Catholic white collar workers respectively. By 1936 it was clear that the Parliamentary right had no solution either to the recession or to the re-emergence of a threat from the left in 1934. In other words, the political and economic elites had been discredited, and the process of negotiation which is essential to democracy had broken down. This was the context in which the growth of the leagues, with their combination of hostility to the establishment, anti-

liberalism, corporatism and authoritarianism, occurred. These processes can be observed both in the Rhône and in national politics

The Economic Crisis

It is often argued that fascism could not have taken root in France because economic difficulties were not as great as in Germany or Italy.¹ One can, however, question the notion of a direct connection between economic crisis and fascism. The United States went through a depression of an intensity that was at least equal to that of Germany without experiencing a significant fascist threat. Of course, no-one would argue that economic crisis alone produces fascism. But once it is accepted that the impact of the depression has to be brought into relation with ideological, political and social context, then a more sophisticated view of economic crisis is required. This cannot be obtained simply by counting the number of unemployed or bankruptcies.

All the same, economic crisis *does* play a part in the genesis of fascism. So we are obliged to ask how serious it was. International comparison of a vague notion like this is fraught with difficulties. In Germany industrial production fell at its worst to 58% of its 1928 level in 1932. In France the bottom of the slump came in 1935, when industrial production fell to 75%. This is a significant though not enormous difference which is perhaps compensated by the much greater length of the French crisis. Closer analysis of the Rhône, moreover, reveals that for employers the economic crisis was a traumatic experience. Wage earners fared rather less badly. Peasants were somewhat cushioned from the slump's effects in the Rhône, but nonetheless had considerable cause for discontent. In France as a whole the agricultural crisis was perhaps more severe than in Germany.

In the Rhône export industries were first to be affected by the crisis. Complaints came first from the silk industry when certain markets for luxury goods were closed as a result of stabilization of the Franc in 1928.² By the end of the year there were signs of falling orders in several industries, but as yet nothing to indicate what was ahead.³ At the end of 1930 Albert Cotte, President of the *Union des marchands de soie*, attributed the lesser gravity of the crisis in France to "natural prudence and national savings".⁴

Yet in his next report Cotte spoke of "a disastrous year, which had begun badly and ended still worse". In 1931 a crisis developed from which the *fabrique* never truly recovered.⁵ Its fate was determined by massive over-production of raw

1 See for example, Pierre Milza, op. cit., pp. 114-5; Rémond, op. cit., pp. 293-4.

2 CRCCCL, pp. 662-3. Ferier report.

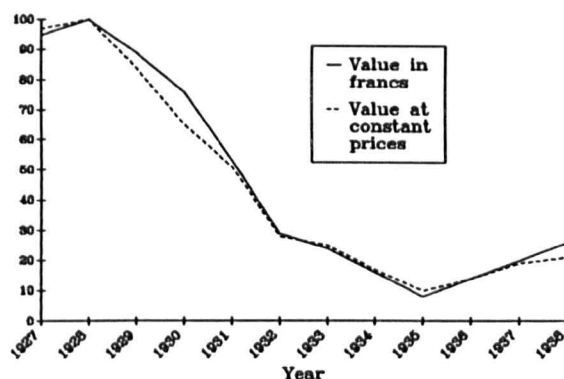
3 For example: chemicals, CRCCCL, 1928, p. 677; silk, pp. 625-6. Most employers were preoccupied with a shortage of labour. In the engineering industry exports began to fall in 1929, but more workers were taken on, so home demand must have compensated (CRCCCL, 1929, pp. 672-4).

4 CRCCCL, 1930, report of Cotte. Dyeing appears to have been worst affected, for its work-force fell by 20 to 25% (CRCCCL, 1930, p. 606-610).

5 CRCCCL, 1931, pp. 527-552. The police reported general concern at the end of 1931 (AN F⁷ 13 040, 3-12-1931).

and spun silk in Japan and of woven cloth in the USA. Japanese dumping in the French market became worrisome. Additional downward pressure on prices came from expansion in the use of rayon. When used in the industry's mainstay crepes, the average customer could no longer differentiate it from natural silk. Besides these structural problems the industry suffered from contingent difficulties like the growth in protectionism, a decline in the purchasing power of the east due to a fall in the value of silver, and a simplification of female dress.⁶

Graph 21 Value of French silk exports. Base 100 = 1928



The gravity of the crisis in the silk industry is difficult to overestimate. Graph 21 shows that the value of French silk exports, most of them originating from Lyon, had plunged by 1935 to ten percent of their 1928 value.⁷ The home market could not compensate. Only imperial markets continued to provide significant outlets. Turnover fell by 80%.⁸ An indication of the level of bankruptcies comes from the huge fall in membership of the SFS from 725 in 1929 to 300 in 1937.⁹ In the dyeing sector, where turnover was at about 25% of its 1928 level in the mid-1930s, the number of firms in the arrondissement of Lyon fell from 119 to 69.¹⁰ *Marchands de soie*, thanks to their dependence on the health of world trade, were still more vulnerable to bankruptcy.

A regional survey in January 1932 put unemployment in all textile industries at 25% (see Table 13). After this date things must have got considerably worse. A figure of 35% was cited for silk weaving in 1934.¹¹ The number of workers employed

6 Laferrère, op.cit., pp. 217-8; CRCCL, 1930, pp. 567, 644; CRCCL 1931, p.557.

7 Value of silk exports given in CRCCL deflated by cost of living index in Lyon. This index, based on the prices of nineteen essential goods plus wine, gas and oil, is hardly ideal. The industry itself reported in 1934 that *total* production at stable prices was at 20% of its 1928 level.

8 Relative decline of the silk industry is shown by the fact that it accounted for 11% of French exports in 1928, but only 5% in 1935.

9 CRCSE, 1928 and 1937: a drop of 60%.

10 CRCCL, 1937, pp. 415-7.

11 *Lyon républicain*, 26-9-1934. Geni, op. cit., p. 112, stated that in 1935 60% of looms were not working. Bonnevill, op. cit, p. speaks of numerous closures of weaving factories in Villeurbanne.

in the dying industry was reduced by no less than 55% between 1928 and 1934. Those who remained were on short time.¹²

Table 13: Unemployment in the Lyon region in January 1932 (percent)¹³

Textiles	25	Leather	14
Metal working	22	Transport	10
Building	21	Sales staff	10
Glass/ceramics	19	Office staff	7
Wood	19	Food	7
Clothing	15	Printing	3

The gravity of the crisis in the silk industry was variable. Lyon retained its advantages in the production of natural silk cloths. But some specialities were virtually eliminated. Worst affected perhaps was Victor Perret's sector, silk braids and church decorations, badly hit in 1931 by tariffs in Britain and India.¹⁴ Difficulties were also great in the production of cheap rayon crepes. Since the range of such cloths was very narrow competition was pushed to extremes, with consequences to which we shall return in a moment.¹⁵ French production of rayon thread rose during this period from 20 million kilograms in 1931 to 26 million in 1933. But since prices were falling there was a substantial thinning in the ranks of small and medium producers of artificial fibres. There were eleven factories in the agglomeration in 1929, but only six in 1935. These were operating at about 30 to 50% below capacity.¹⁶

In the silk industry, and in certain other luxury industries such as shoes and leather, a whole mode of production had been shown to be wanting.¹⁷ Lyonnais producers paid the price for technical backwardness, for in the 1920s they had simply incorporated rayon into the old flexible structures of the silk industry, using it to increase the variety of cloths.¹⁸ Export possibilities in the 1920s had masked this weakness. So *fabricants* found themselves ill-prepared to compete in the new market for standardized rayon mixtures. Dyers too suffered because rayon products required less specialized treatment, and so could be dyed and finished anywhere in France.

The long term future of the metallurgical industries was not in doubt. All the same, the depression was severely felt. Turnover fell from 2.2 billion francs in 1930 to less than one billion in 1934.¹⁹ General activity was reckoned to have declined by

¹² CRCCCL, 1934, p. 378.

¹³ *Nouvelliste*, January 1932.

¹⁴ CRCCCL, 1931, 581; *Nouvelliste*, 5-3-1931: Its spokesman stated "cette fois c'est la «morte», nous pouvons, je crois, dire, sans crainte d'exagération, que notre belle industrie, jadis si prospère, «n'existe plus»; l'atelier familial est désert, l'usine a fermé ses portes, le personnel des bureaux est réduit à sa plus simple expression".

¹⁵ CRCCCL, 1931, 577. By the mid-1930s most of those looms which continued to function wove rayon and cotton mixtures alone.

¹⁶ A Pinton, "La soie artificielle à Lyon en 1935", ER, 1936, 17, pp. 104-7.

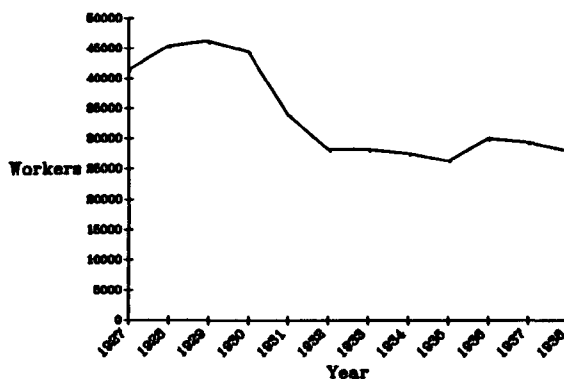
¹⁷ In the shoe and leather industries, cheap mass produced shoes with rubber soles, often imported from Czechoslovakia, had overturned the semi-luxury methods of the French.

¹⁸ CRCCCL, 1929, p. 644: Louis Guéneau said that the rise of rayon "s'est produite avec une intensité, avec une rapidité si différentes de celles du passé en matières textiles qu'on est déconcerté".

¹⁹ CRCCCL, 1933, 390-398.

40 to 50% by 1935.²⁰ As Graph (?) shows, employment fell from a peak of 46,318 in 1929 to 26,432 in 1935—a drop of 43%.

Graph 22: Employment in the engineering industry in the Rhône, 1927-39²¹



Foreign competition, above all German, and the end of rural electrification were the most often cited causes. But local factors also intervened. Worst hit of all were those making machinery for the silk and dyeing industries. In this sector the work force had fallen by 55% and turnover by 75% in 1935.²² Also badly affected were engineering firms making heavier machinery. Since raw materials made up the largest part of their costs they found themselves vulnerable to competition from concentrations of engineering factories in steel producing areas such as the Lorraine. A notable victim of this problem was Edmond Weitz, who was obliged to sell out to the Barras group in 1936.²³ Best able to cope with the crisis were highly capitalized firms in the electricity industry. But even here experience was variable. ²⁴ Petrier, Tissot & Rambaud had at first been badly hit by the halt in rural electrification, but managed a certain recovery through technical innovation.²⁵ On the other hand the Compagnie d'électro mécanique, reported substantial falls in employment, volume of production and turnover.²⁶

It would be possible to describe an equally grave crisis in other sectors.²⁷ Among the worst hit was the shoe industry, where the work force fell from 5,000 in

²⁰ *Lyon républicain*, 15-12-1935.

²¹ Source: annual reports in CRCCL.

²² Interview with Emile Giscard, *Lyon républicain*, 29-12-1935. Guy Aroud and Charles Cabaud, President of the metal traders' association attributed the crisis as a whole to the problems of the silk industry (*Lyon républicain*, 15-12-1935).

²³ Laferrière, op. cit., p. 300, CRCCL, *Lyon républicain*, 15-12-1935, 29-12-1935. Weitz also lacked the capital to maintain the stocks necessary for quick delivery.

²⁴ Dumont in *Lyon républicain*, 29-12-1935.

²⁵ *Lyon républicain*, 29-12-1935: at Petrier, Tissot & Rambaud turnover had fallen substantially, but it was now possible to produce the same volume with 20% fewer workers. The manager of Cables de Lyon stated that wise financial management and membership of a cartel ensured that the company had been experienced no crisis at all.

²⁶ *Lyon républicain*, 29-12-1935.

²⁷ The figures are from CRCCL.

1930 to 2,000 in 1935. Only firms making cheap shoes prospered.²⁸ The building industry lost about 4,000 of the 10,000 workers it had employed in 1930. Rather than multiply endlessly such examples, suffice it to say that only a few industries such as printing, gas and electricity supply passed through the crisis with no difficulties at all. Also, one whole region, that of Villefranche, appears to have more or less escaped damage. The reasons for this are not clear.

There is then plenty of evidence that for employers the crisis was a traumatic experience. This fits with the picture in France as a whole. Using 1928 as a base, profits, adjusted for falling prices, fell by 18%. Real wages, on the other hand, fell by 6%.²⁹ That the crisis did not lead to the creation of a pool of unemployed could be seen as compounding the difficulties of employers, especially as throughout the depression there were complaints of a shortage of skilled labour.³⁰ This meant that in France the left did not suffer from the deep divisions between employed and unemployed, socialists and communists, which did so much to handicap the German labour movement.

Turning our attention to the impact of the slump upon those receiving salaries and wages, caution must first be expressed about the use of official figures to measure unemployment. The number of those receiving benefits from municipal funds reached a peak of 14,639 in March 1935, perhaps 6% of the workforce. But women were not included; not all of the unemployed received benefit;³¹ some returned to their villages; immigrant workers were repatriated while others set up as artisans;³² unemployed rural weavers lived off their meagre plots of land. Above all official figures do not reflect the prevalence of short-time working. In the 1932 report quoted above it was stated that only 41% of employees worked a full forty-eight hour week. This is why official figures do not square with the sort of figures seen in Table 13.³³

Of particular interest is the impact of the recession on white collar workers. In the 1920s white collar work ceased to be the key to social mobility that it had been before the Great War. Economic crisis accentuated this development. The precise level of white collar unemployment is difficult to assess. But there is considerable qualitative evidence of difficulties. Table 13 shows that in 1932, not the worst year, seven percent of office staff and ten percent of sales staff were unemployed (see page 192). In some sectors unemployment was probably greater. The *Union des marchands de soies* reported that by 1935 its members had laid off 200 of the 700 they had em-

²⁸ CRCCL, p. 616-20.

²⁹ Sauvy, op. cit, p. 137. In Germany they fell by 14%.

³⁰ For example, *Bulletin des soies*, 18-4-1936. Engineers made the same complaint.

³¹ To qualify for benefit it was necessary to have lived for six months in a given commune.

³² *Nouveau journal*, 15-11-1938. According to official figures the number of foreigners in the Rhône fell by 6,660 between 1930 and 1932. The figures were originally compiled by the *conseil général*. The number dropped much more substantially from 1935 when legal limits were placed on the proportion of foreigners who could be employed.

³³ *Nouvelliste*, 21-3-1932.

ployed in 1929. Most of these would have been office workers. In 1933 Claudius Dériol wrote in *La Voix sociale* that white collar employees had been touched by unemployment rather later than manual workers, but had not avoided the problem in the long term. In a sample of twenty eight Lyon firms the number of office workers had fallen by 28% between 1929 and 1932. He added that for white collar workers unemployment was all the more disturbing because of its adverse affects on career structure. He also reported that salaries had declined by 30%.³⁴ There is also evidence to suggest that many engineers had been affected by unemployment. In 1933 on the initiative of Herriot the Chamber of Commerce set up a fund to aid those engineers who had been embarrassed by the crisis.³⁵

In the countryside the impact of the crisis was variable. Worst affected were those dependent upon market production. As in industry the turning point was in 1931, when the prices of wine, milk and fruit, three of the main products of the Rhône, collapsed. The chief features of the crisis are well known—over-production, falling urban demand, falling exchange value of agricultural goods, and foreign competition--and need not be rehearsed here. As for the specific effects of the crisis on the Rhône, we are much less well informed.³⁷

Most is known of the Beaujolais. Prices collapsed as a result of the poor quality harvest of 1931. Beaujolais producers were also vulnerable to competition from French North Africa, where a more favourable terrain permitted greater mechanization of production. Large growers had to cope with rising labour costs and by the need to offer more attractive contracts to ever scarcer share-croppers. For small and medium proprietors income from wine sales was wholly absorbed by production costs. Labour for the vintage had to be paid from the sale of milk, fodder and cereals.³⁸

Next to nothing is known of the experience of peasants in the rest of the department. From 1931 fruit growers began to complain of the closure of German markets and of Italian competition.³⁹ Milk producers in the mountains suffered falling prices from 1931. There were fears of a return of the indebtedness which had affected the peasantry before World War One.⁴⁰ Some turned to more profitable vegetable growing, thereby increasing competition in an industry suffering from the rivalry of Brittany, Italy and North Africa. Since Lyonnais soils were not suited to vegetables

34 *Voix sociale*, July/August, 1933. Dériol used the expression "filière" to refer to career structure. *Voix sociale*, October and December, 1934, reported that in order to facilitate lay-offs the practice of paying office and sales staff by the hour spread, while in the banks time keeping and supervision were tightened up.

35 PVCCCL, 29-6-1933.

36 Barral, op. cit., pp. 218-221.

37 In Gilbert Garrier's study of the peasantry of the Rhône the impact of the depression is all but obscured by a focus upon long term developments. Furthermore, he relies heavily on price series, which are of rather poor quality in the interwar years.⁷

38 Garrier, op. cit., pp. 596-598, 602-605. Burel, op. cit., p. 52.

39 *Nouvelliste*, 14-3-1931.

40 Garrier, op. cit., pp. 612-614.

and products were of low quality, market gardeners were badly placed to meet this competition.⁴¹

In periods of falling profits peasants could either abandon their farms, or they could turn to subsistence farming. Given the down-turn in the industrial labour market, and given that self-sufficiency was not an easy option in a period when peasants were becoming dependent on loans, this was not an enviable choice. All the same, outside of the Beaujolais and a few communes which had gone over almost entirely to wine or fruit production, the possibility of retreating into subsistence farming does seem to have blunted to some extent the effect of the crisis.⁴² Furthermore, the Rhône peasantry benefited from the fact that the region was not self-sufficient in grain, which meant that wheat prices were higher than elsewhere. This is why producers large and small in the Rhône were opposed to a minimum price for wheat, since it threatened to homogenize the French market.⁴³ All of this helps to explain why economic crisis led at first to the radicalization of the peasantry only in the Beaujolais, where small proprietors and even some share-croppers turned to socialism and cooperatives.

To sum up, the impact of the crisis was greatest upon business large and small, though other groups also experienced hardship. But the slump is important also because it affected a right which was already divided culturally, politically, economically and socially. It engendered ferocious competition at all levels of society: between firms for scarce markets, and between individuals for jobs.

From Liberalism to Corporatism

In the following sections we will look at the impact of the crisis upon interest group politics before June 1936. We will see the development of corporatism and authoritarianism which pre-disposed many to view favourably the leagues. Our starting point will be conflicts within the ruling class. There were two main issues. The first, protectionism, was more or less confined to the Rhône and to the few areas where free trading interests remained powerful. The second, and most important, centred on the question of state intervention in economy, and involved debates about liberalism and corporatism.

Protectionism

Protectionism can be dealt with fairly briefly. Before the economic crisis agricultural syndicates had been more or less alone in demanding increased tariffs. Most industrial interests accepted that the prosperity of the region depended upon the maintenance of

⁴¹ Jeantet and Willemain, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

⁴² This was the view of an editorialist in the *Nouvelliste*, 22-8-1935.

⁴³ *Nouvelliste*, 19-7-1934.

the silk industry's foreign outlets. This was true even of the engineering industry, although it was increasingly reliant on the home market.⁴⁴

During the depression industrialists, led by engineers, increasingly tended to side with agriculture. In 1931 a *fabricant* denounced, in the name of economic liberalism, the protectionism of "certains milieux agricoles français et certains groupements industriels dont le marché intérieur constitue le débouché essentiel".⁴⁵ Within the Chamber Edmund Weitz clashed with the free trade majority on several occasions.⁴⁶ Weitz went as far as to demand that public contracts be reserved for local industrialists. His reasoning is revealing of attitudes in this period: since a closed economy was imposed on us by such interests as agriculture and the coal industry, then engineers were obliged to get on as best they could in this poisoned atmosphere: "primo vivere"!⁴⁷

Relations between exporters and agricultural syndicates also declined. In the privacy of the Chamber of Commerce in 1931 a new tariff on imported maize was denounced as "an unjustifiable privilege for agriculture".⁴⁸ The agricultural press was full of denunciations of industry.⁴⁹ In 1934 the debate reached the daily press when the SFS published an open letter to Prime Minister Doumergue in which it was claimed that "personne ne saurait soutenir que les intérêts de commerce et de l'industrie et, plus particulièrement des commerçants et industriels exportateurs, ont été l'objet des préoccupations gouvernementales comme c'est le cas pour la production agricole".⁵⁰

The issue is complicated by the fact that although it remained convinced that there could be no real recovery until free trade was restored, the Chamber of Commerce had since 1932 been agitating for limitations on Japanese imports of rayon goods.⁵¹ The Chamber's readiness to break with liberal principles in order to protect the silk industry shows that it was falling victim to the logic of social politics in the economic crisis. Rather than represent the general commercial interest of the region,

44 CRCCL, 1928, p. 697. In 1928 Edmund Weitz rejected the idea of lower tariff barriers, but opposed what he saw as excessive demands of agricultural interests for greater protection.

45 CRCCL, 1931, p. 562-3.

46 PVCCL, 3-7-1930; 13-11-1930 and 14-11-1935. Both representatives of engineering favoured retaliation against the American Hawley-Smoot tariff of July 1930. In 1931 and again in 1935 Weitz spoke out in the Chamber against the Chamber's efforts to lobby the government in favour of free trade.

47 CRCCL, 1931, 597.

48 PVCCL, 13-11-1930. Attacks on protectionist raw silk producers in the Cévennes were particularly virulent (CRCCL, 1930, p. 568).

49 *L'Agriculteur du sud-est*, 2-5-1935, claimed that the interests of wine-growers had always been sacrificed to those of big business.

50 *Lyon républicain*, 19-9-1934. The letter provoked an angry rejoinder from Félix Garcin on behalf of the *Union du sud-est*. Rather pertinently he asked what the silk industry itself would say were the representatives of agriculture to demand the reduction of contingents on Japanese rayon in order to sell rice to the Indochinese (*Nouvelliste*, 25-9-1934).

51 PVCCL, 10-11-1932, 30-3-1933, 18-1-1934, 28-2-1935. Costs were so low in Japan, claimed Henry Morel-Journal, that it was possible for the Japanese to purchase thrown rayon in France, weave it in Japan and then re-export it to French Indo-China. The political objections of a government fearful of offending Japan should be overridden. The question was exceedingly delicate, because measures against Japanese competition in Indochina risked closing the colonies' own export markets in Japan and occupied China.

the Chamber must have appeared to many to be a mere extension of the silk lobby, especially as the demands of other industries for protection were rejected by the Chamber in the name of liberalism.⁵² The Chamber's position as arbiter of the general interest was compromised.

The question of protection for the silk industry also undermined the unity of the *fabrique*, for it was the largest capital intensive firms which were most likely to produce the threatened cheap rayon goods. Luxury traders like Perret were more interested in re-opening world markets. Big silk firms therefore moved closer to the position of the engineering industry, and even to that of agriculture. Yet the possibility of realignment on this basis was undermined by the fact that all businessmen were united in the belief that state aid to agriculture artificially increased the price of bread.⁵³ The obstacles to agreement on *any* issue in the mid-1930s were immense.

A final point is that all sides in the dispute over protection believed the state to be in the hands of their opponents.⁵⁴ Hence the demand common to a wide variety of groups that the state reassert its independence. This provides a link between interest group conflict and politics proper.

Corporatism

The debate over protectionism shows that economic liberalism was one of the first casualties of the depression. In its place there flourished a variety of alternatives variously referred to as the "organized profession", the "directed economy" or "corporatism". Historians have usually passed rapidly over corporatism, particularly where business politics are concerned. Richard Kuisel, for example, sees it as a vague academic doctrine in which few employers were interested.⁵⁵ In reality corporatism is one of the keys to understanding the period, for it is a concept which links the social, economic, ideological and political. Certainly it was an ambiguous notion—this was part of its appeal. But this should not prevent us from recognising that it was, like nationalism, a contested ideology, to which a variety of groups struggled to give meaning.

Before proceeding further a preliminary clarification of terms is called for. Many contemporaries distinguished the "organized profession" from "corporatism". But in practice the distinction meant little. The term "entente" was often taken to mean merely a binding agreement between firms, without wider implications for the organization of society. But in practice this distinction was difficult to sustain. In what follows "corporatism" is used as a generic term. Beyond that, as far as possible,

⁵² PVCCCL 16-2-1933: the wood trade saw its demands for quotas rejected on the grounds that the industry was already sufficiently protected. The silk industry justified itself by distinguishing a general tariff from temporary contingents, and by claiming that Japanese competition was unfair.

⁵³ *Nouvelliste*, 19-4-1934. Vautheret of the *Fabricants de soieries* stressed the accord of protectionists and free traders on this issue.

⁵⁴ See page 197.

⁵⁵ Kuisel, *Capitalism*, pp. 102-4; R. Vinen, *The Politics of French Business, 1936-1945*, Cambridge, 1991, p. 55.

the vocabulary of the participants has been respected. Corporatism is understood to mean a belief in self-government by professional bodies, whose decisions are legally binding. As such it is distinguished from voluntary agreements such as cartels, acceptable to many liberals, and from the statism of social democracy. Indeed, corporatism purports to be a middle way between *étatisme* and liberalism.

In practice there was little agreement on the nature of corporatism. First, there was the question of whether membership of corporative bodies should be compulsory. If not, then the profession would be directed by existing employers' associations. The big firms which dominated these associations therefore opposed compulsion. In effect corporatism meant giving these bodies legal backing for their views on such matters as prices and working conditions. Compulsory membership was more likely to be favoured by medium and small firms and by representatives of peasant proprietors.

The second issue, which was often only implied in the sphere of interest group politics, was the question of the compatibility of corporatism with democracy. We shall see that although corporatists generally presented their ideas as an alternative to statism, they were in practice, thanks to the circumstances in which corporatism arose, permanently vulnerable to authoritarianism.

The third issue is the attitude of corporatists to economic progress. Historians have generally followed Alfred Sauvy in seeing corporatism as Malthusian.⁵⁶ Often the intention was indeed to curb industrialization. But corporatism could also be anti-Malthusian. It was seen by some as a means of overcoming the "unfair" competition of artisans, which was in turn a result of their privileged position in the Third Republic. This was another source of anti-parliamentarianism.

Corporatism in the engineering industry

Foremost amongst those calling for "organization of the profession" were representatives of the engineering industry. We are not well-informed on the details of their projects, but some general points can be made. Engineers had moved away from the democratic corporatism of the 1920s now that wage cuts had become a priority. Collaboration with trades unions was no longer viewed with favour. In December 1933 engineering employers unilaterally denounced the collective contract of 1928, citing the economic crisis as justification.⁵⁷ But engineers adapted their ideas to new circumstances. Their view of the *profession organisée* shows certain continuities with the democratic corporatism of the 1920s, while simultaneously showing a tendency towards authoritarianism. That engineers preferred the term "profession organisée" to "corporatism", which they associated with the extreme right, can be seen as evidence

⁵⁶ Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-6, sees the Marchandea Bill of 1935 as an example of restrictive practices. Discussing the "entente professionnelle" in the shoe industry introduced in 1936 Alfred Sauvy quotes his former patron Paul Reynaud on the subject of "la république de semelles percées" (A. Sauvy, *Histoire économique de la France entre les deux guerres*, 4 vols., Paris, 1965-1967, pp. 371-2).
⁵⁷ *Voix sociale*, December 1933 and February 1934.

of the Republican roots of their ideas. Among the first to agitate for organization of the profession were foundry operators. For this group the *profession organisée* was a democratic alternative both to Mussolini's corporatism and to extreme liberalism. For Emile Giscard, director of a firm making machinery for the textile industry, ententes would have to be introduced, "sinon nous allons au suicide ou à l'étatisme".

All the same the organized profession implied limitations on individual liberty and a new role for the state. Indeed, engineers were rather more favourable to state intervention than were many other employers. The ambiguity of corporatism is illustrated by an exchange between Guy Aroud and Edmund Weitz in *Lyon républicain*:

Aroud: En somme vous souhaitez que l'Etat se soucie d'imposer de l'ordre dans l'anarchie présenté par des mesures de compensation et d'organisation des marchés. C'est l'économie dirigée.

Weitz: Mais oui; où au moins organisée par les groupements professionnels sous le contrôle et l'autorité de l'Etat.⁵⁸

Weitz stressed the self-governing role of the profession, but in effect he was asking for state backing for the decisions of his syndicate.⁵⁹ This is more or less what the government offered in the abortive Marchandeaup project of 1935, which provided for legal enforceability of industrial cartels, and which Weitz whole-heartedly approved.⁶⁰ Weitz's corporatism was that of big business--a means for highly capitalized firms to ensure remunerative production in a period of falling prices. In the absence of sufficient documentation it is not possible to analyse conflicts within the metallurgical industry over the meaning of corporatism. But there are hints that some firms had different views. Founders, a sector of small and medium employers, were most vociferous in their demands for corporatism. That a new founders section of the engineering employer's association was formed in 1934 suggests discontent within this group.⁶¹ Finally, whilst engineers shared the pessimistic industrial outlook of the 1930s,⁶² their attitudes were not Malthusian in a simple sense. An enquiry carried out for *Lyon républicain* found that engineers were unanimous in rejecting the notion that state or corporation should impose restrictions on the output of machines. On the contrary, the interviewees declared that only renovation of machinery and meticulous organization of work had permitted them to struggle against foreign competition.⁶³ C. Pionchon of a firm making car gearing told Aroud, "Quelle folie de vouloir arrêter le progrès technique. Le progrès technique crée des besoins nouveaux. [...] Au contraire,

⁵⁸ *Lyon républicain*, 15-12-1935.

⁵⁹ *Lyon républicain*, 29-12-1935. Georges Villiers, future president of the post war CNPF, called frankly for "l'économie dirigée".

⁶⁰ PVCCL, 14-2-1935. On the Marchandeaup project see below p. 203; E.J. Massoubre, op. cit., passim; O. de Magondeaux, *Les Ententes industrielles obligatoires en France*, Paris, 1937.

⁶¹ *Nouvelliste*, 13-6-1934.

⁶² For example, C. Pionchon: "We are going back to a pre-1914 situation. I don't know if that's "normal". But it's happening!". *Lyon républicain*, 29-12-1935. Demands for preferential treatment in the awarding of state contracts must be seen as a restrictive practice.

⁶³ *Lyon républicain*, 15-12-1935. There was, Aroud reported, a consensus that rationalization permitted production of the same volume of goods with 30% fewer workers.

il faut créer sans cesse".⁶⁴ On the contrary corporatism was a means of encouraging production and safeguarding investment by putting an end to falling prices. For the engineering industry the main problem was that purchases were insufficient in a period of falling prices to permit profitable mass production.⁶⁵

Corporatism in the silk industry

In the case of the silk industry it is rather easier to make sense of conflicting views of corporatism. The crisis in the silk industry led to extreme competition within a narrow market for mass produced rayon mixtures. Large firms could adapt to this by two means. They could take advantage of Lyon's reputation for luxury goods to gain an advantage in the market for cheap goods. Hence sponsorship of a law forbidding the use of the label "artificial silk" on rayon goods. It was felt that the confusion caused by this appellation worked against the reputation of the *fabrique* as a whole. Second, big firms advocated greater industrialization of weaving. This could be achieved by investment in more efficient looms and by better organization of work, especially through the double or triple shift system.⁶⁶

Falling prices were the main obstacle to this strategy.⁶⁷ Big firms blamed "unfair" competition from home weavers for the collapse of prices. Thus Vautheret, President of the SFS, echoed all the conventional homilies on the moral value of the family workshop. But, he argued, thanks to the democratization of silk and rayon cloths family workshops now produced the same articles as factory producers. It was therefore unfair that artisans should enjoy exemption from the turnover tax, pay income tax at a lower rate, avoid the jurisdiction of the labour inspectorate, and not be obliged to pay social insurance contributions.⁶⁸ Vautheret's depiction of the inhuman working conditions in rural workshops was a far cry from the utopianism of Victor Perret.

Corporatism, or an "entente", was seen by big firms as a means of equalising conditions in the industry.⁶⁹ In the Chamber of Commerce one member argued that if an entente imposed limits on production it would force small firms out of business, to which Paul Charbin replied that small and medium firms had coped with the crisis

64 *Lyon républicain*, 29-12-1935. Similarly, in the Chamber of Commerce Edmund Weitz was alarmed by the possibility that ententes would have the power to destroy excess capacity. PVCCL, 25-10-1934.

65 *Lyon républicain*, 15-12-1935.

66 Report of Vautheret in CRCCCL, 1932, p. 285-291; PVCCL, 22-3-1932.

67 CRCCCL, 1930, 552-3: at first it was hoped that falling prices would eliminate competition and thereby raise prices.

68 Archives Godart, carton 1, Vautheret to Godart, 5-11-1934: "En voici le tableaux: usines strictement contrôlés, écrasés par les charges, entraînés à des tarifs de façon ruineux pour le patron, avec des salaires de famine pour l'ouvrier, en face des ateliers à domicile, exempts de la plupart des charges et compensant par un horaire prolongé le taux bas des salaires.

69 Archives Godart, carton 1, Humbert Isaac to Minister of Commerce, 13-10-1935: "L'institution de l'accord professionnel n'est vraiment demandé que par un petit nombre de gros producteurs d'articles de grande consommation. [...] Actuellement, certains de ceux qui se plaignent le plus de la surproduction songent à installer des métiers automatiques dont le rendement est énorme".

much more successfully because their costs were lower.⁷⁰ In October 1934 the arguments for an entente were presented to a government enquiry into the industry. It would set a minimum price (*tarif*) for the weaving of cloth by *façonniers*. Financed by a tax levied on raw materials, the entente would purchase, and perhaps even destroy, any looms which came onto the market. The creation of new factories would be controlled, the working day limited, new markets sought out, merchandise stocked, and new techniques would be perfected.⁷¹ It was assumed by many that social laws would also be extended to home weavers, but in fact this was the subject of a separate campaign.

The pro-entente *fabricants* found allies in other branches of the industry.⁷² Strongest in their support for an entente were the *gros façonniers*. Like *fabricants usiniers*, these large sub-contractors complained bitterly of competition from home weavers. Having failed to secure a *tarif* from the *fabricants non-usiniers* who provided them with orders, the *gros façonniers* attempted without success from 1931 to 1933 to set up a consortium, which would set its own *tarif*.⁷³ As the leader of the *gros façonniers* put it, "Quelle cercle vicieux dont on ne pourra sortir que par un vigoureux coup de rein". He went on to explain that the only solution was to appeal to the state for regulation of home workshops, and for the means to destroy excess capacity.⁷⁴

Second, the idea of an entente was backed by *marchands de soie*, whose production of rayon thread was equally compromised by artisan competition. This group included the powerful figure of the President of the Chamber of Commerce, Henry Morel-Journel, whose view was influenced by his position as a large producer of rayon.⁷⁵ According to an opponent of the entente, Morel-Journel's affairs had been affected by the unwillingness of Courtaulds, newly established at Calais, to join the French artificial textile cartel. He hoped, therefore, that a successful entente in the *fabrique* would set a precedent for production of rayon thread.⁷⁶

The motives of the supporters of the entente were sometimes, but not necessarily, Malthusian. The efforts of big weavers to remove artisanal competitors has to be seen in the context of the state's own protection of the artisanate. Opponents of the entente described it as a means of restricting industrial progress, and evoked the free play of market forces. Yet they expected market forces to function within a regime where small production was privileged.

70 PVCCL, 24-1-1935.

71 Details from a circular of the SFS, 10-9-1935, in Archives Godart, carton 1.

72 Debates in the Chamber of Commerce reveal that nearly all industrialists in Lyon supported the idea of ententes. PVCCL, 14-2-1935.

73 *Nouveau journal*, 1-11-1931; *Nouvelliste*, 26-11-1931, 29-11-1931; *Voix sociale*, July 1932.

74 *Lyon républicain*, 20-4-1935. Already in 1932 *fabricants* and *gros façonniers* had formed a common committee. This, according to Vautheret was an historic rapprochement of hereditary enemies. It can be supposed that *fabricants non-usiniers*, as opposed as ever to a minimum tariff, were less than happy (CRCCL, 1932, p. 287).

75 PVCCL, 30-10-1935 and 14-11-1935; CRCCL, 1935. He informed the Chamber of Commerce that such a compulsory entente was even more necessary for production of rayon.

76 Archives Godart, carton 1, Eymard to Van Gelder, 4-11-1935.

Continuities between the entente and the modernizing views of the late 1920s can also be seen in attitudes to state and trades unions. Proponents of the project generally presented it as an alternative to government action.⁷⁷ Yet not only did the state have representatives in the arbitration committee of the entente, but the CGT would have been involved.⁷⁸ Probably big business would have preferred to limit the role of government, and to keep the CGT out altogether. Indeed, it was hoped that an entente would lead to a more supple application of the Eight Hour Law. But if this was the price of an entente, then big business was ready pay it. And if there had to be social reform, then it must be applied to all.

A more genuine reformism was evident among *gros façonniers*, a product of their long struggle for a *tarif*. Monomy, leader of their Lyon section, claimed that the entente was inspired by Papal encyclicals on the social question. In July 1932 the *gros façonniers* and the CFTC reached an agreement on matters such as length of the working day, numbers of looms that a worker could operate and extension of social insurance to home workers. These attitudes owe much to the historic opposition of *gros façonniers* to merchant manufacturers, which pushed them to the left.⁷⁹

Through the national textile employers' association the silk industry joined with cotton interests from the Nord in petitioning the Ministry of Commerce for an obligatory entente. The Ministry agreed to the request, which in January 1935 saw the light of day as the *loi Marchandeau*. By this time its provisions had been extended to cover all branches of industry. In Parliament, however, the bill was substantially amended, giving the Minister of Commerce a greater role in implementing ententes, and worse still incorporating some of the demands of the trades unions. As a result most employers, with the significant exception of the Lyonnais, lost interest in the bill. The majority of French employers were no doubt relieved when it became lost in the intricacies of the Senate.⁸⁰

In Lyon the silk industry did not give up the fight. It profited from the grant of special powers to Pierre Laval in June 1935 to request a decree law, which was duly issued on last day of October. It was to be implemented on condition that it was approved by a majority of two thirds of the members of each of the three syndicates concerned—the SFS, the *marchands de soie* and the *gros façonniers*. Each majority also had to possess three-quarters of the capacity of their respective branches. For this reason *non-usinier* members of the SFS could not vote. By this time, however, oppo-

77 PVCCCL, 14-2-1935. Henry Morel-Journal argued that unless the present proposition, which allowed the profession itself to take the initiative, was accepted, then the alternative would be measures analogous to those of President Roosevelt.

78 Archives Godart, carton 1, Eymard to Van Gelder, 4-11-1935. As one slightly hysterical opponent of the entente put it, "non seulement le Ministère du Commerce est représenté dans le soviet qui doit présider aux destinées des ententes professionnelles mais encore le Ministère du Travail s'est infiltré dans ce même comité par la présence d'un délégué et, d'autre part, [...] il y aurait un délégué ouvrier et certainement, il y en aura plusieurs: probablement un représentant chaque région de tissage. C'est donc la socialisation complète de notre industrie".

79 *Voix sociale*, July, 1932, November 1935.

80 Massoubre, op. cit., passim.

sition to the project had grown. When the vote took place it was accepted by the *marchands de soie* and *gros faconniers*, but was rejected by a enough *fabricants* for the accord to fail.⁸¹ Table 14 shows that the cause of failure was the opposition of smaller *fabricants usiniers*. The minority of *marchands de soies*⁸² and *gros faconniers* who voted against were also smaller than average.

Humbert Isaac, director of a firm with 137 looms, is perhaps representative of smaller *fabricants usiniers*. His views appear to have been fairly widely shared, for they form the basis of the propaganda of the committee set up to oppose the accord. As would be expected of a son of Auguste Isaac, he believed that “la loi éternellement vrai de l’offre et de la demande est encore la meilleure règle que l’on puisse trouver pour déterminer le prix d’un ouvrage comme celui d’un marchandage”. All that Isaac expected of the state was that it reduce taxes, make greater efforts to protect exports, and enforce bankruptcy laws more rigourously.⁸³ Consequently he was opposed to the prospect of state or trades union interference in labour questions.⁸⁴

Table 14: Result of referendum on the institution of an entente in the silk industry.⁸⁵

	For	Against	Abstained
Fabricants	71	37	10
Average looms	223	139	181
Gros faconniers	186	3	-
Average looms	81	50	-
Marchands de soie	100	26	-
Average spindles	6,470	5,808	-

Isaac’s liberalism was not, however, the classical liberalism of Edouard Aynard. He believed the longevity of the crisis to be due to the unwillingness of employers to observe correctly the laws of supply and demand. He appealed to his fellow businessmen to regulate production in accordance with possibilities for sales, and to aim not for the highest, but for the most profitable turnover. Hence his criticism of those big firms whose enormous capital investment was responsible for over-production.⁸⁶ In the same spirit Isaac condemned certain *gros faconniers* who added to over-produc-

81 For a summary of the story of the entente see Geni, op. cit., pp. 112-141.

82 It could be that in this branch throwers of natural silk were less favourable than those like Morel-Journal who also produced rayon. Henry Morel-Journal reported in his diary on 29-4-1932 that there had been disagreement in the *Union des Marchands de Soie* over this issue.

83 *Archives Godart*, carton 1, rapport Isaac, 13-10-1935.

84 *Archives Godart*, carton 1, A circular from *Comité de défense*, 12-11-1935, inspired by Isaac, stated, “Certes nous sommes sans animosité à [l’égard des syndicats], mais l’expérience nous à enseigné que le mieux était de nous entendre directement avec notre personnel”.

85 CRCL, 1935, p. 148.

86 See footnote 69. A circular of the *Comité de défense* asked “Pourquoi les commerçants prudents feraient-ils les frais de ceux qui ont vu trop grande?”. An article in *Salut public*, 20-11-1935, of which Isaac was managing director, took up the same argument.

tion by speculatively producing cloth on their own account, and then dumping it on the market. These weavers, he said, ought to decide whether they were *fabricants* or *façonniers*.⁸⁷ Clearly such views are a violation of the law that progress is achieved by the pursuit of individual interest, with the “hidden hand” taking care of the rest. Isaac assumes that there is a “normal level” of demand. This is not too far removed from Victor Perret’s view of a world where everyone knew their place. Firms like Isaac’s used the *façon* system, as well as their own factories, to weave cloth.⁸⁸

This brings us to the opposition of *fabricants non-usiniers* to the accord. For the *Nouvelliste*, their fear of a *tarif* and for the survival of the artisanate was the main source of opposition to the entente.⁸⁹ The entente was all the more galling to *fabricants non-usiniers* because they were not permitted to take part in the referendum.⁹⁰

As President of the gold braid and church decoration section of the SFS, Victor Perret’s views are relevant. Perret was not, as we have seen, opposed in principle to corporatism.⁹¹ Yet had dismissed out of hand the Marchandean project, which he saw as an unwarranted intrusion of the state into professional affairs. His interest as a *fabricant non-usinier* comes through in his statement that “nous ne voudrions pas que disparaissent les petites entreprises à base familiale au profit des trusts et des cartels”.⁹² His views had not changed at the time of the referendum, although significantly he was now far less forthright in expressing them. An entente could operate only after *all* members of a profession had been obliged to join a syndicate.⁹³ This is a contradictory position in that compulsory syndicalization itself implied prior action by the state. But the essential point is that compulsory membership must be seen in the context of Perret’s opposition to an entente managed by big business. This was understood by big factory owners: Paul Charbin saw the Marchandean project as a means of avoiding compulsory syndicalization.⁹⁴

It is interesting to note that not all *fabricants non-usiniers* accepted Perret’s corporatism. The minority of anti-clerical centrist *fabricants* agreed that the projected entente was the work of big firms “qui s’intéresse peu à l’artisanat”. B. J. Van Gelder agreed too that application of social legislation to these workshops, a *tarif*, and the

87 Archives Godart, carton 1, rapport Isaac, 13-10-1935.

88 Similarly Isaac senior idealised the lot of rural weavers: after work “elle respire l’air de la campagne, elle aperçoit la silhouette des montagnes, et peut aller cueillir des fleurs dans son jardin. (Isaac, op. cit., p. 101).

89 *Nouvelliste*, 5-12-1935.

90 Archives Godart, carton 1, *Gros façonniers*, on the other hand were permitted a vote, even though since they purchased no raw material they would not be paying the tax. See also a resolution of the *Chambre syndicale de la fabrique de Tarare*, complaining that it was not allowed to participate in the vote, and Fructus to Godart, 16-12-1935: “je vois que la question de fond est une lutte contre le métier d’artisanat”.

91 This is partly why opposition to the entente manifested itself at such a late stage, only when the details became known. *Journal d’Henry Morel-Journal*, 18-10-1935: the opponents “ils n’ont pas bronché pendant les huit mois où les autres élaboraient avec le ministère leur projet”. Another reason was that it was only known at a late stage that only possessors of fixed capital would be permitted to vote.

92 *L’Union républicaine*, 17-2-1935.

93 *L’Union républicaine*, 24-11-1935.

94 PVCCCL, 25-10-1934. Henry Morel-Journal also saw a combination of ententes, state backing and private initiative as an alternative to corporatism, *Lyon républicain*, 27-10-1935.

proposed tax would deal a decisive blow to the artisanate.⁹⁵ Indeed, he used the example of his own firm to show that the entente was a threat to the whole system of flexible production. Year round weaving of cheap fabrics for the east, made possible by low costs, was the only means of keeping in action looms which were also capable of producing certain kinds of luxury silks when fashion demanded.⁹⁶ But at this point Van Gelder parted company with Victor Perret. His solution was a minimum wage in the silk industry, to be set by the government.⁹⁷ This would take the question out of the hands of "personalities". The assumption was that a professional body, whether in the form of the abortive entente or of Perret's compulsory syndicalism would be dominated by his political opponents.⁹⁸

Although the participants in the debate over the entente differed in ideological and economic points of view, all shared a consciousness that the self-regulation of the liberal economy had broken down. All recognized that if equilibrium were to be restored then external intervention was required. Isaac relied simply on an appeal to respect laws which no longer worked of their own accord. For Fructus the state would have to intervene. Victor Perret clung to the belief that the profession could govern itself, but presupposed legal obligation to join a syndicate. The supporters of the entente wanted the decisions of syndicates to be given legal sanction. With the exception of that favoured by Isaac, all of these options implied compulsion and authority.

Moreover, the fiasco of the *entente professionnelle* in the silk industry increased the potential for authoritarianism by demonstrating that interests within the silk industry were more or less incapable of settling their own differences. With the failure of the entente positions became even more irreconcilable. Disheartened, Ferier made known his resignation as President of the SFS, which had been decided in principle before the referendum had even taken place.⁹⁹ Significantly Ferier was replaced by Jean Barioz, the first *non-usinier* to head the syndicate for many years. The *gros faconniers* meanwhile rallied to the demands of the CGT for a statutory forty hour week, abolition of shift working and a minimum wage. Divisions among employers were such that they prevented even unity against the Popular Front. Horrified, *fabri-cants* agreed rapidly to a minimum *tarif*. But the agreement had no hope of sticking and was in any case rapidly over-taken by the events of June 1936.¹⁰⁰

95 "Il serait vraiment pénible de voir ces artisans qui ont un ou deux métiers (rarement trois) chez eux, être obligés de travailler sous un contrôle et une réglementation qui, s'ils sont bon dans une grande usine sont complètement arbitraires vis à vis d'un particulier"

96 Archives Godart, carton 1, Fructus to Godart, 28-9-1935, 30-9-1935; Motion of Group II of the SFS, (Articles pour l'Orient), 26-10-1935.

97 Not a tariff, which would penalise non-usiniers, but a minimum wage to be applied to the whole industry.

98 Archives Godart, carton 1, Fructus to Godart, 16-12-1935: "Voyons d'abord la question ouvrière, et non avec un tarif de façon, mais avec un minimum de salaire horaire - cela est plus de l'ordre du législateur, que de l'ordre des personnalités qui n'ont pas, ou plus le droit de parler au nom d'une collectivité qui les a désapprouvés".

99 Journal d'Henry Morel-Journal, 18-10-1935.

100 Bulletin des soies, 25-4-1936.

Organized Agriculture, Prices and Corporatism

In Chapter three it was shown that the liberal elites who dominated the USE were from 1929 challenged by the JAC, which made progress amongst young medium peasant proprietors on the plateau and in the mountains. From 1933 representatives of this group began to win places in the USE, which at the same time abandoned liberalism in favour of corporatism. The context was increased conflict between the conservative peasantry and the elites, resulting from the depression.

In a speech of 1935 Jean-Marie Parrel made clear his hostility to the industrial methods of large farmers, which he felt would destroy savings, the family, and the spirit of initiative which characterized small property.¹⁰¹ Parrel was implicitly referring to a series of conflicts over pricing policy, especially concerning grain and wine.¹⁰²

Even though the Rhône was not a major grain producing department, wheat prices were nonetheless an issue. Most peasants produced some grain, while there were also a few large producers such as Julien Riboud. The central problem was that the USE opposed the minimum wheat price voted by Parliament in July 1933, and called for a return to the free market, though in the long term it was hoped that the organized profession would take over responsibility for grain prices.¹⁰³ But when in December 1934 the Flandin government abolished the minimum price, it became clear that the views of small peasants were rather different. Whilst the pro-Radical peasantry, were entirely opposed to the ending of price controls, conservative peasants demanded that the return to a free market be gradual.¹⁰⁴ In the short term Parrel was even prepared to accept the "économie dirigée", which in effect meant keeping the minimum price.¹⁰⁵ Like the leaders of the USE he saw organization of the profession as the ideal solution.

A parallel conflict can be seen in the Beaujolais wine growing region. After World War One large growers in the Beaujolais had replanted their vineyards with more productive hybrids.¹⁰⁶ Rather like big silk manufacturers, large growers hoped to get through the depression by making greater use of productive hybrids, by adding alcohol to wine, but nonetheless profiting from the renown of Beaujolais wines.¹⁰⁷ An organization of small producers of good quality wines, protested that hybrids had deformed the taste for the gamay. Eighty per cent of *vignerons*, it was said, were in favour of ripping up hybrids.¹⁰⁸ Small growers in France as a whole won a victory

101 *L'Union républicaine*, 31-3-1935. Similarly Jean Napoly, a small winegrower from Pommiers also called for organization of the peasantry.

102 It is possible, and even probable, that there was also tension between tenants and landlords, as there was in Brittany. More research would be needed to confirm this.

103 See, for example, Julien Riboud's talk to the *Société d'économie politique*, reported in *Union républicaine*, 17-2-1935. *Agriculteur du sud-est*, 24-12-1934.

104 *Agriculteur du sud-est*, 24-12-1934; *L'Union républicaine*, December 1934.

105 *Union républicaine*, 31-3-1935.

106 See Chapter 3.

107 *Nouvelliste*, 11-12-1934.

108 *Nouvelliste*, 13-12-1934.

with *Statut viticole* voted by a conservative government in 1931. This included restrictions on the sugaring of wine, limits on new plantations, taxes on high producers, and even the banning of irrigation after July. Legislation was later modified to include a range of exceptions for small growers. In 1934 inspection of cellars was authorized.¹⁰⁹ In the Beaujolais small growers, still not satisfied, demanded that hybrids be ripped up. These measures, and especially the demand for *arrachage* of hybrids, were bitterly resented by large growers.¹¹⁰ It was argued that hybrids were merely an "insurance" planted alongside high quality vines. These views were echoed by the USE. To a greater extent than in the case of grain the conflict between big and small producers coincided with the division between left and right. But many conservative peasants also produced wine, and so this issue tended to reinforce discord within the right.

Corporatism was a central issue in conflicts over pricing. At its origins the USE had subscribed to a paternalist version of corporatism founded on natural hierarchy. But as the USE in the 1920s became a pressure group operating within the Republic, it turned to liberalism. Its only real contact with its peasant base was now through commercial activities.¹¹¹ With the onset of the economic crisis this kind of syndicalism was called into question, not least because the financial operations of agricultural associations all over France were compromised by the recession.¹¹² This offered an opportunity to militants formed in the JAC.

In the national sphere the rise of the JAC coincided with a renovation of the methods of the notables who led conservative syndicates. In 1934 a new generation of leaders, such as Le Roy Ladurie and Salleron, transformed the loosely organized *Union central des syndicats agricoles*, a part of the empire of the conservative *Société des agriculteurs de France*, into the *Union nationale des syndicats agricoles* (UNSA). Leaders were still mainly large landowners, but they were prepared to see greater involvement of the base.¹¹³ A parallel process of adaptation took place in the USE, which adhered immediately to the UNSA. President Félix Garcin spoke of the need to make sap rise from the roots to nourish the leaves.¹¹⁴ The USE had traditionally maintained good relations with the ancestors of the JAC, the *Groupes d'études rurales*.¹¹⁵ Therefore the USE was well-placed to co-opt JAC militants like Claudius Delorme, Benoît Aurion and Jean Nové-Josserand as "auditors" of its *conseil*

109 Barral, pp.

110 *Nouvelliste*, 7-2-31. Most would have agreed with the *Nouvelliste's* view that the tax on production was nothing more than an attack on large growers.

111 M. C. Cleary, op. cit., pp. 48-51, shows that the same was true elsewhere in France: "Many regional unions were, first and foremost, powerful financial bodies". The same applies in Brittany, cf. Berger, op. cit., p. 84. For the Rhône: A. Pin, op. cit., p. 71.

112 Cleary, op. cit., pp. 72-4. In the canton of Vaugneray, for example, the USE purchasing co-op saw its turnover fall by 65% between 1929 and 1932 (A. Pin, op. cit., p. 71).

113 Cleary, op. cit., p. 73; Barral, op. cit., p. 233.

114 Pin, op. cit., p. 73.

115 Folliet, op. cit., p. 46.

d'administration".¹¹⁶ Jean Parrel too owed his rise to leaders of the USE such as Julien Riboud.¹¹⁷

Garcin also rallied to the corporatism of the UNSA. Slogans like "Le régime corporatif est le seul manière de ne pas aller du libéralisme au socialisme" adorned the title page of *L'Agriculteur du sud-est*.¹¹⁸ For Garcin conversion to corporatism was pragmatic. It was an affront to the liberalism of a man who taught political economy at the *Faculté catholique* and managed the *Nouvelliste*. Garcin embraced corporatism only in order to hold together the rural interest.¹¹⁹ Other USE leaders were more sincere, but this should not obscure the integrative function of corporatism.¹²⁰

It meant different, but nevertheless precise, things to different groups. Like big businessmen, USE leaders saw corporatism as giving the syndicate legal backing for its decisions.¹²¹ Thus Saint-Olive defined corporatism as voluntary adhesion to the syndicate, but the legal right of the syndicate to impose prices on all.¹²² For these reasons the Marchandeu law was at first approved by the USE, though the amended project was rejected as statist.¹²³ Jean-Marie Parrel, like the JAC, saw corporatism differently: it was a means of modernising small farms through co-operation. This would be achieved by creating syndicates which were not just purchasing cooperatives, but the basis of an organization of small producers.¹²⁴ It is not clear whether or not Parrel believed in compulsory syndicalization, but it is certain that his ideas represented a challenge to the establishment. Corporatism, then, was meant to overcome increased conflict in the rural world.

There is one interesting exception to the broad appeal of corporatism—that of large wine growers, who demanded a return to the free market.¹²⁵ Partly this was because liberal principles were a useful weapon against a system of regulation that was already in place. But in fact there was no real practical alternative to the free market. State intervention was unacceptable because of the influence of small growers and large producers of *vin ordinaire* on government policy. Any professional body would have been dominated by the same groups. The situation of large growers matches in many ways that of pro-corporatist silk manufacturers like Victor Perret.

116 Gayet, op. cit., p. 70 ff.

117 Pin, op. cit., passim.

118 *Agriculteur du sud-est*, 28-7-1935.

119 Gayet, op. cit., pp 92-95, 118-9.

120 Berger, op. cit., pp. 120-129.

121 Berger, op. cit., pp. 120-129.

122 *Nouvelliste*, 6-4-1936: "Tout en laissant à chacun le droit d'adhérer ou non aux syndicats, il faut que la profession organisée par des organes distinct des syndicats, mais emmenant au moins partiellement d'eux, soit à même de régler, de discipliner les rapports de ses membres avec le commerce, d'imposer à tous la loi du bien commun professionnel et de sanctionner ceux qui, par malheur, se soustraient à leur devoir envers la collectivité". The *Nouvelliste* itself, 21-6-1930 and 28-6-1935, had much the same idea, the notion that all producers could be organized was rejected. The USE dominated Chamber of Agriculture resolved that ententes were a good idea, but that the peasantry were not ready for compulsory corporate organization (*Nouvelliste*, 25-12-1935).

123 *Union républicaine*, 17-2-1936; *Lyon républicain*, 22-2-1935.

124 *L'Union républicaine*, 31-3-1935. Similarly Jean Napoly, a small winegrower from Pommiers, called for organization of the peasantry.

125 *Nouvelliste*, 30-7-1930; 11-12-1934. *Union républicaine*, 15-9-1935. They were not above demanding state credits to enable growers to get through bad years.

He would have preferred in theory some sort of corporate organization, but since the only realisable form of organization of the profession would have been in the hands of big business, he tended to fall back on liberalism. Ironically then, whereas the aristocrats who had originally founded the USE looked to market forces, the more bourgeois leaders of the movement in the 1930s turned to the *profession organisée*.

Corporatism and authoritarianism

It is possible to see around corporatism the coalescence of a new conservative alliance. It included employers in both the engineering and silk industries, and indeed in most industries. Corporatism appealed also big landowners and to sections of the peasantry. We shall see that it was also embraced by the CFTC. But the cement of this new alliance was of a special type, in that the negotiation, compromise and consent which had characterized the old liberal consensus on the right was now replaced by an ideology in which coercion was central. The root of the problem was the impact of economic crisis upon a divided society.

There was in a crisis of legitimacy of bodies which purported to represent the general interest. In the Chamber of Commerce the amicable sittings of the 1920s, gave way to the acrimony in the 1930s. Doubtless this is why President Celle in 1932 passed on a warning from the Parisian Chamber against "la multiplicité des organisations commerciales qui arrivent par leurs démarches répétées et parfois divergentes à nuire au intérêts du commerce".¹²⁶ On important issues the Chamber could either say nothing at all or it could take sides. In the first case it risked being seen as irrelevant; in the second as partial. Thus during the conflict over the entente the Chamber adopted an attitude of neutrality.¹²⁷ Yet within the Chamber President Morel-Journal lobbied for the entente's extension to rayon production.¹²⁸ What is more, Morel-Journal headed a pro-entente delegation to the Mayor of Lyon. Morel-Journal was also attacked for having set up an artificial fibre factory in Britain. This was widely seen as unethical for a person charged with defending Lyonnais industry.¹²⁹ The Chamber's position as an essential prop of the liberal consensus was fatally damaged in the early 1930s.¹³⁰ Similarly, the legitimacy of the USE was threatened by conflict between peasants and elites.

Corporatism was one response to this crisis. The underlying assumption of corporatists was that there is a single professional and national interest. Conflict must

¹²⁶ PVCCL, 13-10-1932.

¹²⁷ *Archives Godart*, carton 1, Eymard to Van Gelder, 4-11-1935; PVCCL, 17-10-1935: Morel-Journal stressed that the question would have to be settled on the professional level.

¹²⁸ PVCCL, 30-10-35, 14-11-1935. *Lyon républicain*, 10-11-1935 for meeting with Herriot.

¹²⁹ *Archives Godart*, carton 1, Eymard to Van Gelder, 4-11-1935 and report on Morel-Journal of group 3 (Haute nouveauté) of the *Syndicat des fabricants*.

¹³⁰ The Chamber of Commerce's position on deflation was equally contradictory: in April 1934 it refused to pass on to the government a request from candle makers for tax reductions on the grounds that it would aggravate budgetary disequilibrium. Yet at its next sitting the Chamber approved the idea of tax concessions for export industries! PVCCL, 22-4-1934, 8-2-1934.

therefore come from outside the profession. The source could either be liberalism, which preaches individualism and selfishness, or socialism, which permits interests alien to the profession to intervene via the state. All that was necessary was for people to recognize the primacy of the profession, and harmony would be restored. But in practice authoritarianism is implicit in corporatist doctrine. This is because there is in reality no single professional interest. Indeed, were there such an interest there would be no need for a corporation. Corporatists always stopped short of defining the interest of a profession. Instead they mystified the problem and smuggled coercion into a communitarian argument.¹³¹ Thus big silk firms and the USE demanded legal enforceability of ententes, while Victor Perret assumed a legal obligation to join ententes. Others demanded “depoliticization of trades unions” as a precondition of corporatism. Corporatism is a form of authoritarianism masquerading as self-government. It re-unites a divided society by coercion and because it takes advantage of the ability of special interests to identify their own concerns with those of the collectivity.

Authoritarianism also derived from a crisis of the state, for it too appeared to be incapable of arbitrating conflict. In various disputes described above all parties denounced the grip of opposed interests upon the government. For Henry Morel-Journel businessmen were “the least among electors”, but “first among taxpayers”.¹³² He attributed the excessive number of pro-artisan bills before the Chamber of Deputies to “electoral interest” in this category.¹³³ Victor Perret saw the *loi Marchandreau* as evidence of the interference of the sectional interests which dominated Parliament in affairs which did not concern them.¹³⁴ Business leaders were doubtless confirmed in their views by Laval’s response to a free trade delegation from the Chamber of Commerce that he would be instantly overthrown were he to touch a single agricultural quota.¹³⁵ Many more examples could be given.

The essential point is that the collapse of existing methods of resolving differences, together with belief in the partiality of the government, led to demands for restoration of the independence and authority of the state. Thus the Chamber of Commerce accepted its own impotence in a motion to the government on the subject of deflation. The motion was a chance for the Chamber to have its say, “non précisément sur le détail des projets de redressement financier au sujet desquels il serait difficile de se mettre d’accord mais sur la méthode indispensable pour arriver à ce redressement”. The means were an end to “la politique de concessions perpétuelles sacrifiant l’intérêt général à la cohue désordonnée des appétits particuliers”, and to “l’abandon par les gouvernements de l’arbitrage souverain que l’Etat doit exercer en-

¹³¹ Berger, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-9.

¹³² CRCCL, 1935, 69-73.

¹³³ PVCCL, 30-4-1936.

¹³⁴ *L’Union républicaine*, 17-2-1935.

¹³⁵ PVCCL, 14-11-1935.

tre les intérêts antagonistes".¹³⁶ In the privacy of his diary Henry Morel-Journal went beyond anti-parliamentarianism, writing that "le mal est à l'origine dans l'élection au suffrage universel".¹³⁷ Of course, business did not conceive of the independence of the state in abstract terms. It was assumed that a "neutral" state would protect particular interests. Most importantly, it would put an end to the agitation of the left.¹³⁸

A final point is that corporatism and authoritarianism embraced groups which had in the past formed part of the liberal hegemony—the USE and the Chamber of Commerce. No doubt this could be rationalized as drawing upon the associationist side of liberalism, and by pointing out that liberalism in Lyon had always accorded a large place to the family as a regulatory influence. Henry Morel-Journal's elitism too is reminiscent of Orleanist distrust of the masses. But what is most interesting is that corporatism and authoritarianism did not simply represent the updating of a Legitimist tradition, but drew upon liberalism. Ironically, those closest to the Legitimist tradition—the landowners of the Beaujolais—stood by a market philosophy. Even Victor Perret tended in practice to mute his corporatism.

The Mobilization of the lower middle class

Corporatism and authoritarianism functioned as a means of reconciling competing interests in the ruling class. But it was also designed also to contain the discontent of the peasantry. In this section we shall see that there was in the early 1930s a parallel crisis in the relations of the elites with white collar workers and small business. In the former case it was a question of rank and file supporters of the right who were attracted by the social programme of the left. In the latter a part of the rank and file of the left had become detached from its traditional leaders.

Catholic Trades Unions and the Slump

Between 1932 and 1936 the CFTC's relationship to the right became ever more complex. On the one hand the new hostility of the right to social reform, its commitment to deflation, and the attractiveness of the social programme of the Popular Front widened the gulf between Catholic trades unionists and the conservative elites. On the other, the nature of the CFTC's Catholicism and the anti-clericalism of the left ensured that the CFTC remained within the right wing bloc. Moreover, some white collar workers were attracted to the far right.

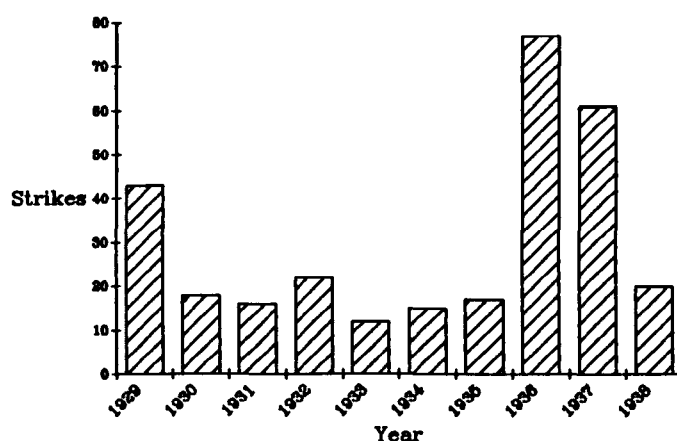
¹³⁶ PVCCL, 19-1-1933.

¹³⁷ *Journal d'Henry Morel-Journal*, 14-5-1936. At about the same time in the Chamber of Commerce Morel-Journal denounced a proposed reform of the national Chambers of Commerce movement on the grounds that it would produce a body "ou jouerait la loi du nombre qui n'a déjà pas donné de si bons résultats dans d'autres domaines" (PVCCL, 13-2-1936).

¹³⁸ *Lyon républicain*, 29-12-1935: As a boss in the engineering industry put it, "il suffit que les journaux annoncent des échauffourées de rues entre gens de droite et de gauche, des discussions parlementaires etc., que le courrier commerciale diminue de 30%".

During the recession, like so many other groups, the CFTC intensified its efforts to protect the material interests of its members. *Voix sociale* is full of reports of violations of the Eight Hour Law and of non-application of the Social Insurance Act. Catholic trades unionists were particularly active in opposing demands from shopkeepers for Sunday opening, revealing thereby some of the ideological and material barriers to a united movement of the lower middle class.¹³⁹ The CFTC demanded that police and labour inspectorate be given greater power to enforce industrial legislation, and that workers' delegates watch over conditions in their own factories.¹⁴⁰ Above all the CFTC demanded the a forty hour week without loss of pay as a means of combating unemployment.

Graph 23: Strikes in the Rhône, 1929 to 1938¹⁴¹



The CFTC were also pushed to the left by the fact that once the right had returned to power in February 1934 it seconded the efforts of employers to roll back social insurance legislation. Thus in June 1935 the CFTC pledged itself to defend social insurance from a plan to divert some of its resources into national retooling.¹⁴² There was, then, a significant degree of convergence between the CFTC and the demands of the CGT and CGTU as far as practical issues were concerned.

The CFTC also participated in a moderate improvement in the fortunes of trades unions in general from 1934. As Graph 23 shows the number of strikes in the Rhône was very low from 1930 to 1935. Employers faced little resistance as they cut wages and rationalized work practices. A rare exception was a bitter strike of 2,500 workers in the blanket industry of Cours, Thizy and Pont Trambouze in 1931.¹⁴³ But

¹³⁹ *Voix sociale*, March and December 1933, March 1934.

¹⁴⁰ *Voix sociale*, November, 1934.

¹⁴¹ *Bulletin du Ministère de travail*. Figures for 1936 do not include the month of June, in which there were 505 strikes in the Rhône; those for 1938 cover only January to September.

¹⁴² *Voix sociale*, June 1935.

¹⁴³ Gric, op. cit., pp. 206-7; *Voix Sociale*, March, April, May, 1931. In 1933 a mere twelve stoppages were reported.

in 1934 and 1935 there was a small increase in strike activity and in the first five months of 1936 alone there were thirteen stoppages. Furthermore, from 1934 there were a number of strikes which were notable for the scale of the enterprises concerned, for the degree of support among the workforce and for the advanced nature of the demands of the strikers. There were two victorious strikes at the Gillet factories in 1934 and 1935, as a result of which wage cuts were withdrawn.¹⁴⁴ In the spring of 1936 Berliet workers demanded wage rises, called into question the system of individual contracts, and demanded an end to time and motion studies. On this occasion the workers failed, but those sacked during the dispute were able to invade the factory and precipitate a successful strike in June 1936.¹⁴⁵

In the present context what is important is the impact of these developments upon the CFTC. Catholic trades unions had if anything been worse affected by recession than the CGT or CGTU.¹⁴⁶ The Prud'homme elections of 1932 saw the CFTC lose most of the gains of 1929.¹⁴⁷ But at the end of 1935 CFTC activists began to report success in recruiting new members. In the Prud'homme elections of December 1935, the CFTC lost one of its seats, but gained votes as participation levels increased.¹⁴⁸ The extent to which white collar workers were involved in strikes is difficult to gauge. A judicial report states that the Berliet strike was supported by all white collar workers below the level of *chef d'atelier*. On the other hand Marius Berliet's biographer claimed that drawers had worked at home during the stoppage.

There is also evidence that the CFTC was radicalized by the new climate in the factories. In the Cours blanket dispute of 1931 the CFTC had from the beginning been willing to accept the principle of wage cuts. It ended up organising a new "professional" union.¹⁴⁹ Yet four years later the CFTC joined with the CGTU in the strike committee at Gillet, merely adding its own special demand for a paritary commission. Similarly, whereas at the time of the Doumergue deflation in March 1934 the CFTC had shown little sympathy for the protestations of *fonctionnaires*,¹⁵⁰ by the time of Laval's measures the CFTC declared its solidarity with civil servants and railwaymen.¹⁵¹

144 Details of the strike come from *Voix sociale*, June and July/August 1935 and *Lyon républicain*. *Humanité*, 9-5-1936: "Gillet, battu dans les teinturiers et apprêts de la région lyonnaise en 1935, doit être écrasé dans les usines meurtrières de fabrication de Bayonne".

145 AN BB¹⁸ 3010, various reports of the *procureur-général*, March and April 1936. Saint-Loup, op. cit., pp. 205-214. There were also reports in the press of successful opposition to wage cuts in other engineering factories in 1935 (*Lyon républicain*, 23-3-1935). There was a lengthy stoppage at the SASE artificial fibre factory at Vaulx. Here too there were demands for suppression of the Bedeaux piece rate system and for better hygiene (AN BB¹⁸ 3010).

146 On the impact of the depression on membership of the CGT and CGTU see Prost, *La CGT*, pp. 33-37.

147 *Voix sociale*, November, 1932.

148 *Voix sociale*, October and December, 1935.

149 *Voix sociale*, March, April, May, 1931.

150 *Voix sociale*, April 1934: the CFTC merely adopted the relatively moderate view that cuts should be achieved through sackings, not wage reductions. Only the CFTC-PTT complained of cuts.

151 *Voix sociale*, September 1935.

Yet if the CFTC endorsed the material programme of the Popular Front it never approved of its political platform. Catholic trades unions always remained within the conservative bloc. The principal reason for this is that Catholicism remained a barrier to cooperation with the left. The dependence of the CFTC upon the parishes ruled out close alliance with anti-clericals. It is significant that the *Jeune république* alone among Catholic organizations adhered to the Popular Front, for it was less dependent on the parish network. More important, white collar unionism, whether of the left or right, is always likely to be concerned with protection of "career structure". The CFTC appealed to those white collar workers who saw Catholicism as inseparable from defence of social and professional status. Just as Catholic values had at one time been seen as essential to social mobility, so in the new conditions of the 1930s they were inseparable from protection against proletarianization.

The nature of the strikes of 1934 to May 1936 reinforced such fears. From this point onwards the self-confidence of the trades unions was clearly related to success of the left in linking anti-fascism, the government's deflationary programme and the efforts of employers to cut wages.¹⁵² The CFTC would in any case have been worried by the politicization of strikes. But it was all the more so because the anti-fascists' defence of the Republic led them to identify the leagues with what they saw as the regime's hereditary enemies, including the Church. The anti-fascist journal *La Flèche* made no distinction between progressive and conservative Catholics.¹⁵³ Consequently, there were a number of incidents between anti-fascists and Catholics.¹⁵⁴ In such an atmosphere it is not surprising that Catholic trades unions expressed reservations about the political overtones of the Gillet strikes.¹⁵⁵ Relations were most problematic in the building trade, where the main trades union was marked by revolutionary syndicalism and a ferocious anti-clericalism. The "main tendue" to Catholics of Maurice Thorez during the election campaign of 1936 came too late to make any difference.

The CFTC's corporatist ideology was another source of ambiguity. Corporatism was certainly seen by CFTC leaders as a progressive ideology. They saw the Marchandeaup law and the putative entente in the silk industry as a chance to implement their ideas on collective contracts, to set up an unemployment fund, and to secure strong CFTC representation in the commission designed to arbitrate disputes.¹⁵⁶

152 *Lyon républicain*, 5-7-1935: "Il ne suffit pas de vouloir défendre les libertés publics pour empêcher le fascisme de passer. Il est indispensable de lutter en même temps pour faire aboutir les revendications indispensables". On the formation of the Popular Front in Villeurbanne see M. Moissonier, "Front populaire et identité communiste à Villeurbanne, 1933-6", *CHIRM*, 24, 1986, pp. 57-82. The second Gillet strike coincided with a major peace rally organized by the left, at which support was expressed for the Gillet workers.

153 *La Flèche*, 1-12-1934.

154 ADR 4m 236, 3-7-1934: incidents between 1,000 antifascists meeting at the bouldrome Melleret and Catholics holding a gymnastic camp nearby.

155 *Voix sociale*, June, 1935; february 1934 for condemnation of the antifascist general strike of that year.

156 *Archives Godart*, carton 1, CFTC to Minister of Commerce, 15-10-1935. *Voix sociale*, February, 1935: "Nous considérons ce projet comme l'annonce de cette organisation de la production, et donc de la profession, que nous désirons tant" (R. Duclos).

CFTC corporatism can be distinguished from authoritarian versions of the doctrine by the acceptance of the primacy of parliament and of the principle of free choice of syndicate.¹⁵⁷

Yet the corporatism of the CFTC also contained a potential for authoritarianism. Corporatism was a means of restraining competition for jobs. Access to white collar status would be limited by giving employees a role in recruitment, by giving syndicates the power to regulate female employment, and by banning the holding of more than one job.¹⁵⁸ In a more general sense the function of CFTC corporatism was to reconcile a society divided between capital and labour. To this end it contained both a moral appeal for class collaboration and an element of coercion, for membership of a syndicate was to be compulsory.¹⁵⁹ CFTC leaders avoided the question of what they would do were the CGT to refuse syndical liberty. Furthermore, CFTC doctrine participated in a wider pre-occupation with the breakdown of national unity. So it was possible for Catholic white collar workers less well versed in the intricacies of social Catholic thought to see an overlap between CFTC corporatism and the anti-democratic version of the leagues. It was possible to see in the leagues an alternative way of reconciling the anti-communism and anti-capitalism of white collar workers, and of achieving the goal of class harmony by coercion rather than consent. Many young white collar workers joined the *Croix de Feu*.

The ambiguity of the CFTC's position is further emphasized by the persistence of the conservative strand of white collar unionism associated with Auguste Gruffaz. During the crisis Gruffaz remained suspicious of industrialization, but added a new anti-capitalist note to his discourse. It was those employers who had over-invested during the 1920s, he argued, who were now cutting wages.¹⁶⁰ He attacked the *fabricants non-usiniers* who employed most of his own members for their exploitation of *façonniers* and for their opposition to the entente in the silk industry.¹⁶¹ Even the most deferential wing of the CFTC appeared to have become detached from its leaders. In the event Victor Perret's populism and the strength of the *Oeuvre des cercles* in the Croix Rousse, where the *Corporation* was strongest, kept these employees within the Federation fold, but the conflict is nonetheless illustrative of the crisis at grass roots level of the right, and of a crisis which could lead in several directions.

To sum up, the CFTC showed signs in 1934 and 1935 of detachment from the conservative elites. The CFTC leadership continued to hold to a difficult position on the margins of the right. But some of the rank and file, and above all perhaps some of

¹⁵⁷ Launey, op. cit., pp. 306-313.

¹⁵⁸ *Voix sociale*, June, 1935.

¹⁵⁹ *Voix sociale*, January, 1933.

¹⁶⁰ *Voix sociale*, December, 1930, February 1931.

¹⁶¹ *Voix sociale*, September and December, 1933; December, 1935.

the potential audience of the CFTC, resolved the difficulties of their position by turning to the far right.

Small Business

During the economic crisis there was a flowering of organizations purporting to represent small business. Small business generally supported the left, but it is nevertheless important to discuss this movement. This is because a significant minority of small businessmen did back the right. Indeed, the right was not without influence in its professional organizations.¹⁶² Secondly, the small business movement was part of a crisis of professional organizations, which ultimately affected the Chamber of Commerce. A third reason is that there were signs that small businessmen were shifting away from the Radical-Socialist orbit to the far right. Before proceeding any further it should be noted that we are concerned mainly with shopkeepers and small businessmen. Artisans usually kept apart from shopkeeper and small business movements.

In Chapter four we saw that small business organizations were well-integrated into the business establishment. The ACS, the most representative small business organization, collaborated with the big business dominated UCS in presenting lists in professional elections. Moreover, the ACS shared the alarm of the Chamber of Commerce at the establishment of a *Chambre des métiers* in the early 1930s. The ACS feared that if the demand of food retailers for admission to the latter were to be accepted then they might become a forum for small business in general.¹⁶³ As long as the economic situation was favourable, small business was happy to go along with the liberal ethos of the Chamber. After all, Radical politicians like Herriot shared its liberalism, especially in financial matters. The mode of election of the Chamber meant that it could be seen by democrats as the legitimate representative of the general interest. In prosperous times less-well off small businessmen took little interest in professional organizations, which were dominated by fairly substantial employers.

In the early 1930s this relationship broke down. Shopkeepers in particular became increasingly concerned with sectional interests. One reason is that shopkeepers were blamed by both employers and workers for the failure of falls in retail prices to match those in wholesale prices.¹⁶⁴ Business saw excessive prices as preventing compression of wages. In an effort to keep down their wage bills many employers orga-

162 Whereas the *Fédération de l'alimentation* was pro-Radical, the *Syndicat des commerçants détaillants de Lyon* (affiliated to the *Fédération du sud-est des commerçants détaillants*), leaned more to the right. Both wings of the shopkeeper movement were affiliated to the ACS.

163 PVCCL, 19-6-1930, 26-3-1936; 14-5-1936: At the time of the organization of the Rhône Chamber of Trades in the winter of 1935 to 1936 Delzeux showed himself as keen as anyone in the Chamber of Commerce to limit its role. The Chamber of Commerce, like the Ministry of Commerce, expressed fears that the Chamber of Trades would arrogate to itself the task of speaking for all petty commerce. They were particularly opposed to the possible inclusion of grocers and butchers, "parce qu'ils apparaissent comme de trop grande personnages".

164 The Prefect's monthly reports routinely mention dislike of profiteering shopkeepers.

nized consumer co-operatives.¹⁶⁵ These were a particular target of shopkeepers, who demanded that their tax privileges be ended. Shopkeeper anti-capitalism was reinforced by resentment of “prix uniques”. Whilst it is true that shopkeepers shared with big business the desire for cuts in government spending, agreement ended at that point. The main goal of shopkeepers was abolition of the turnover tax and its replacement by a production tax—an idea to which industrialists were naturally opposed. Moreover, tax reductions were scarcely compatible with balancing the budget, which was, in theory at least, the goal of deflation.¹⁶⁶

At the same time as small business became more conscious of its material interests the Chamber of Commerce became a less credible representative of the general interest. Delzeux redoubled his efforts to push the demands of small business in the Chamber, gaining motions against *prix unics*¹⁶⁷, a commitment to fiscal equality of cooperatives,¹⁶⁸ and condemnation of competition from travelling shops.¹⁶⁹ But Delzeux had less success on the question of tax reform, perhaps the most important issue of all. In any case it is doubtful whether pious motions from the Chamber of Commerce could have defused shopkeeper agitation.

In these circumstances anti-capitalism might well have reinforced the links of small businessmen with the left. Discontent of shopkeepers, no doubt, is one reason for Radical gains in the elections of 1932. Yet once in power the Radicals did little to satisfy this part of their constituency. Partly this was because, as Serge Bernstein shows, the demands of the various components of the Cartel majority were wholly contradictory.¹⁷⁰ Small business believed that cuts in government spending should be achieved principally by reducing the salaries of civil servants. Civil servants opposed deflation altogether.¹⁷¹

Small business protest began in the winter of 1931-2. From the beginning the running was made by a new organization, the *Union fédérale des Commerçants, artisans et petits industriels de la Croix Rousse* (UF). Shopkeepers in this area appear to have been particularly hard-hit by the crisis, perhaps because it came on top of a growing tendency of the residents of this area to shop in the centre of the city as transport facilities were improved. The UF held its first propaganda meeting in February 1932, reputedly attracting an audience of 1,000 persons.¹⁷² A month later a membership of 450 in the 1st and 4th arrondissements was claimed.¹⁷³ Small business ag-

165 For a defence of these bodies see PVCCL, 12-4-1934.

166 For a fairly typical statement of small business demands see *Journal de Villefranche*, 9-1-1932.

167 CRCCCL, 1934, p. 271-2; PVCCL, 8-2-1934.

168 PVCCL, 30-4-1931.

169 PVCCL, 14-2-1935.

170 Bernstein, op. cit., pp. 230-6.

171 AN F/ 13 040, 3-11-32: “Commerçants et industriels d’une part, travailleurs et fonctionnaires d’autre part affrontent leurs points de vue nettement antagonistes dans le domaine financier [...]”; 1-12-1935.

172 *Nouvelliste*, 26-2-1932.

173 *Nouvelliste*, 26-3-1932.

itation was not, therefore, simply a reaction to the electoral victory of the Cartel in May 1932. Already the movement had an anti-parliamentarian tone.¹⁷⁴

In the winter of 1932 and 1933, against the background of governmental paralysis over the financial question, protest moved onto the streets. In September 1932 the UF took the lead in formation of a *Front économique*, which grouped associations in several other parts of Lyon and the suburbs. The UF itself extended its organization to the suburbs. The Front organized its first big demonstration in September 1932, when a reputed 5,000 demonstrated in the streets of the Brotteaux.¹⁷⁵ At another demonstration in January 1933 there were a number of arrests for seditious cries.¹⁷⁶ Early in March a joint appeal by the *Front économique* and the right wing *Fédération des commerçants détaillants* for a half-day closure of shops met with an unexpected success.

This *journée* inaugurated a series of demonstrations which coincided with the peak of a national campaign by small business.¹⁷⁷ In the Rhône the movement was patronized not only by the *Front unique*, but by all of the main business associations, including the pro-Radical *Fédération d'alimentation*, the ACS, the UCS, AICA and even the USE. Only the Chamber of Commerce stood aside, having been warned by the government to do so.¹⁷⁸

Soon, however, a gap appeared between the *Front unique* and its moderate allies. Already in February the latter had appealed to shopkeepers not to heed a call for a closure of shops on the 16th.¹⁷⁹ On this occasion the plan was abandoned. But on the next national day of action, on 28 May 1933, the *Front unique* was able to demonstrate the strength of its support. While the moderates wanted to confine the protest to a poster campaign, the *Front unique* planned mass meetings at Bellecour in the morning, closures in the afternoon, and then a further meeting in the evening. The Prefect banned the morning parade. But the Bellecour demonstration took place anyway. The *Front unique* claimed 1,000 demonstrators in the morning, and another 3,000 in the evening. The call for shop closures in the afternoon also appears to have been fairly well supported.¹⁸⁰

174 *Nouvelliste*, 2-2-1932. During the election campaign a meeting of shopkeepers in the 6th arrondissement, close to the UF, warned that "sachant par expérience ce que valent les promesses électorales, l'engagement solennel de recourir à des mesures exceptionnelles [i.e. a tax strike] si un meilleur aménagement des lois fiscales n'est pas rapidement voté".

175 *Nouvelliste*, 16-9-1932.

176 *Nouvelliste*, 30-1-1933.

177 Hardly anything is known of the small business movement. See Hoisington, op. cit., passim, and Jackson, op. cit., pp. 65-6.

178 PVCCCL, 30-3-1933.

179 *Nouveau journal*, 16-2-1933: "poursuivre sans motifs nouveaux la campagne qui a été commencé serait créer dans les esprits et sur la voie publique une agitation qui ne pourrait qu'être préjudiciable aux intérêts du commerce et compromettrait même leur cause".

180 AN F⁷ 13 040, 1-6-33 As the police put it "le Front unique a tenté de faire une manifestation de rue désordonnée"; *Nouvelliste*, 29-5-1933.

Once the budget had been voted the agitation died down. Small business agitation did not resume again until the spring of 1935, and then on a lesser level.¹⁸¹ But the underlying causes of discontent had not disappeared, and had in fact been channelled into political action. Neither had the hostility of the UF to the established representatives of small business diminished.

In November 1935 the Union put forward candidates for the two seats in the retail section of the Chamber of Commerce. This was the first time an election to the Chamber had ever been contested. Marcel Perdriel, President of the UF, accused the UCS and ACS of attempting to monopolize the elections,¹⁸² while the latter declared that "la question [est] de savoir si les partisans de la sagesse dans l'ordre l'emporteront sur les tenants de la démagogie".¹⁸³ By the standards of professional elections the campaign was bitterly fought.¹⁸⁴ On the first ballot the UF's two candidates were a mere 111 votes behind the sitting members, who gained 1,227 votes.¹⁸⁵ The latter, however, were elected on the second round. One explanation for defeat is that the election had taken place on 19th December, at a time when many small shopkeepers were retained in their shops by the Christmas rush.¹⁸⁶

The UF also became involved in politics proper. In May 1935 it put forward lists for the municipal elections in the 1st and 4th arrondissements. They obtained respectable scores in the 4th especially. Then in the 1936 general elections the UF presented the pharmacist Alfred Elmigar for the Croix Rousse. Elmigar gained a creditable 18% of the vote on the first round, coming fourth behind the SFIO, the Radicals and the Federation. But to general astonishment Elmigar won on the second ballot. The Federation's candidate withdrew in Elmigar's favour, while the left vote was split between Radicals and SFIO.¹⁸⁷

Elmigar's victory may have been something of a freak, but it dramatizes the importance of the small business movement. It shows the extent to which politics had degenerated into a struggle between sectional interests. The propaganda of the shopkeepers movement contained little besides narrow economic demands. Only anti-parliamentarianism and a hint of corporatism gave the movement a wider appeal. Even then the sentiments expressed were not sophisticated: "nos élues se sont toujours moqués..., et se moquent encore de nos légitimes revendications".¹⁸⁸ For shopkeepers,

181 The occasion was the financial crisis which provoked the fall of Flandin.

182 *Lyon républicain*, 24-11-1935. Our 6,000 members, he claimed, have the right to be represented.

183 *Nouveau Journal*, 12-12-1935, 16-12-1935.

184 *Nouveau Journal*, 21-12-1935: "une campagne d'une violence et d'un acharnement jusqu'alors inconnues en matière d'élections commerciales".

185 These are averages of the votes gained by each side. Only half as many people had voted in the previous elections in 1934.

186 ADR 8 Mp 103 for results of election; ADR 8Mp 105 for letter of *Union fédérale* to Prefect, 7-12-1935.

187 ADR (not coded) elections of 1936: The commissaire divisionnaire, finger as ever on the political pulse of the city had said of Elmigar, "influence politique presque nulle - Aucune chance d'être élue". (12-3-1936).

188 *Nouvelliste*, 16-9-1932.

parliamentarians were in the pockets of civil servants and landlords.¹⁸⁹ The UF therefore echoed calls for restoration of the independence of the state, but simultaneously demanded greater representation of the middle classes in parliament.¹⁹⁰ Similarly, in his election address Elmigar expressed his intention to be the deputy of all: "vous rejeterez cette distinction, bonne pour les enfants, entre rouge et blanc". Yet he went on to demand a series of special measures for the silk industry, particularly for the hard-hit church ornament and braid industry.¹⁹¹

The small business movement is also significant in political terms. According to William Hoisington the peculiarity of the *Ligue des contribuables* was that it brought together a leadership drawn from the extreme right with a rank and file drawn from Radicalism.¹⁹² Although W. Hoisington produces no evidence to support the latter part of his contention, it is nonetheless a plausible argument. In the Rhône the equivalent of the *Ligue des contribuables* was the UF.

The police noted that among the leaders of the *Front unique* in the demonstrations of May 1933 were a number of personalities belonging to *Action française*.¹⁹³ Cross checking in our own files reveals two leading royalist militants, one of whom was Jean Goirand a 35 year old wholesale paper merchant.¹⁹⁴ Of greater significance was that mirror merchant Marcel Perdriel, President of the UF, was a prominent activist in the *Croix de Feu*, and had at one time been a royalist.

Something can be learned of the rank and file of the UF from election results. In 1936 the Radicals lost more votes in the Croix Rousse, where Elmigar presented himself, than anywhere else in the agglomeration.¹⁹⁵ Since the Federation vote remained more or less stable, it can be assumed that the lost votes were distributed between Elmigar and the left.¹⁹⁶ How many of Elmigar's voters were small businessmen is difficult to say. But it is noticeable that Elmigar's best scores were in the popular central districts of the Croix Rousse, and that he did least well where workers were relatively numerous (401) and where the bourgeoisie were over represented (408). It can also be seen from the results of the 1935 Chamber of Commerce elections that the UF support came largely from retailers resident in less wealthy areas. Its best scores were in the popular 1st, 3rd and 4th arrondissements.¹⁹⁷ This accords with

189 In 1935 there was much friction between shopkeepers and landlords. The latter, especially after Laval decreed a 10% rent reduction, believed Parliament to be over-responsive to the needs of shopkeepers, forgetting the illigitimate profits made by many of them during the war. *Nouvelliste*, 17-12-1932.

190 *Nouveau journal*, 9-10-1931 (Comité de défense des intérêts du quartier de la Part Dieu).

191 *Nouvelliste*, 3-5-1936.

192 Hoisington, op. cit., passim.

193 AN F⁷ 13 040, 1-6-1933.

194 AN F⁷ 13 205, 17-11-1928; ADR 4m 244, June, 1936. Goirand was characterized by the police as "très violente". The other was Besson, a chemical manufacturer.

195 They fell from 44% of the registered electorate to just 17%.

196 The right wing vote fell from 21 to 20%, whereas in the rest of the city it had risen a little—tactical voting for Elmigar?

197 ADR 8 Mp, 103. In the commune of Lyon the UF scored less than 10% of the vote in the three arrondissements where the ruling classes were over represented, the 2nd, 5th and 6th. The UF gained only 11% and 9% of the respectively in the proletarian 7th arrondissement and Villeurbanne. On the other hand the UF did well in proletarian areas such as Givors and Oullins.

the pattern of closures in May 1933: shutters were rarely down in the best shops of the centre or the rue République, whereas the movement was better followed in Vaise, La Guillotière and the Brotteaux.¹⁹⁸

Thus a section of the Radical electorate flirted with proto-fascism. This was a development pregnant with possibilities for the regime. Yet with time the left appears to have taken more interest in the UF, probably because of the shock of 6th February and because Radical hands were freed by the collapse of the Cartel. In May 1934 a number of Radical and SFIO deputies attended a rally in favour of rent controls.¹⁹⁹ In the 1935 municipal elections the UF list fused with that of the SFIO on the second ballot. Right wing influence did not disappear. Alfred Elmigar had at one time been a member of the *Fédération républicaine*. He opposed the Popular Front, and in Parliament he sat with the centre right. *Croix de Feu* activist Marcel Perdriel was sufficiently well placed in the Union to be selected as its candidate to the Chamber of Commerce. So if the immediate danger of defection of a part of the Radical electorate had gone, the UF was still characterized by an extraordinary flux in its political allegiances. The assumption of René Rémond that the Republican tradition was automatically a barrier to fascism must be called into question.

From interest politics to party politics

The purpose of the three sections which follow is to discuss the fortunes of the parliamentary right in the midst of a deep crisis of civil society. How did it adapt to (or aggravate) the breakdown of consensus, the growth of authoritarianism and corporatism, the new alignment emerging in business politics, and the discontent of peasants, white collar workers and small business? The parliamentary right proved incapable of transcending these problems, either in the Rhône or nationally.

Victor Perret: "chef des politiciens fascistes du Rhône?"²⁰⁰

From 1932 Victor Perret consolidated his position in the Federation. François Peissel and especially Antoine Sallès were much closer to Perret than they had been when the right had been in power. Thanks to the depression, the victory of the Cartel and the subsequent governmental instability there was a rightwards shift in conservative opinion.

Perret's programme for the general election of 1932 was familiar in its basic strategy: to create a broad conservative alliance by placing economics and hence the national interest above party politics. The national economic interest now required far-reaching cuts in government expenditure. But this was only part of a wider programme, for the new conjuncture appeared to offer the opportunity to roll back the re-

¹⁹⁸ *Nouvelliste*, 29-5-1933.

¹⁹⁹ *Lyon républicain*, 14-5-1934.

²⁰⁰ Bonnevey, *Nouvelliste*, 27-10-1935.

forms of the Tardieu years, and to put into practice some of the long nurtured projects of the Federation right. One particular goal was revision of the Social Insurance Law along mutualist lines.²⁰¹ After the election Perret's tone hardened. Simplifying somewhat, there were two stages to the radicalization of the Federation. At first Perret was confident that his programme, albeit authoritarian, could be realized by a parliamentary majority—a *Union nationale*. The tone hardened in the wake of the riots of 6th February 1934, then from mid-1934, thanks to the failure of Domergue's *Union nationale* government, parliamentarianism was abandoned.

For Perret there were two obstacles to deflation: Parliament and the CGT. If civil servants resisted deflation, then the answer was energetic repression of their "revolutionary" unions, seen as a state within a state.²⁰² Similar reasoning was applied to the social insurance laws. The great mistake was that they had been "transportées sur le terrain de politique pure; la démagogie aidant, elles ont été votées dans le plus grande désordre, sans que soient écoutés utilement les gens compétents qui avaient à les appliquer".²⁰³ In both cases the fundamental idea was that in order to enforce the general interest then state authority must be restored.²⁰⁴

From 1933 the Federation demonstrated a growing interest in constitutional reform. Federation propagandists protested that revision of the constitution was a means of saving the Republic by eliminating abuses.²⁰⁵ So it is worth looking briefly at exactly what reform entailed.

The Federation's views were set out by Charles Gautheron, President of the party's Villeurbanne committee. The central purpose was to free the state from the "dictatorship" of parliament, where sectional interests such as the CGT, civil service unions and corrupt deputies reigned supreme. Not only therefore would parliament be downgraded, but civil service trades unions, the backbone of the CGT, would be abolished. Parliament would be emasculated by losing the power to initiate financial measures, and perhaps any legislation at all. The key to the new constitution would be a much strengthened presidency, which would have the right of dissolution, to call referenda and perhaps the sole right to propose laws. The president would be elected by a college of 1,000 consisting of parliamentarians (reduced in number) sitting together with representatives of "the competences", i.e. Chambers of Commerce, agricultural organizations, the universities, and the "working class" (the CGT would by this time have been greatly weakened). Finally, Gautheron detailed a series of nar-

201 *Nouveau Journal*, 6-4-1932.

202 *Union républicaine*, 30-10-1932.

203 *Union républicaine*, 27-5-1934.

204 *Union républicaine*, 19-2-1933: Perret wrote, "l'opinion publique est très sévère pour ce qui reste du régime parlementaire".

205 Irvine, op. cit., p. 101. William Irvine cites a Perret article of 1935, "Le parlementisme", where he argued that "elimination of parliamentarianism" was the first goal of Frenchmen. W. Irvine correctly argues that in this article Perret's alternative is not anti-democratic. But this article needs to be placed in the context of his wider programme. And even this article *could* be interpreted, as Perret must have been aware, as a call for a new 6th February.

rowly constitutional measures such as female suffrage, proportional representation, family suffrage, obligatory voting, and reduction in the numbers of deputies, all of which, it was assumed, would permanently exclude the left from power.²⁰⁶

Clearly Gautheron's programme does not break entirely with the elective principle. Measures like proportional representation were on the face of it democratic, but their impact was limited by making the President the real focus of power. The latter would be chosen not only by parliament, but by professional associations of the ruling class, who would also have a say in the formulation of legislation. Just as interest groups appealed simultaneously to general and sectional interests, so too did the Federation. Trades unions would be suppressed and Chambers of Commerce given a role in government, all in the interest of restoring state authority. Gautheron's claim that this was a Republican programme rests on an unspoken divorce of Republic and democracy. The Federation protested its loyalty to the Republic, but it never mounted a defence of democracy. This mystification is one which is encountered in all the constitutional projects of the far right.

At this stage, however, the Federation still believed that its ideas could be implemented by winning a majority in Parliament. There was an implicit appeal to the precedent of the collapse of the Cartel and the return of Poincaré in 1926.²⁰⁷ This was not, however, incompatible with exploitation of the Stavisky scandal, or with predictions of a confrontation between public opinion, at last mobilized, and the Cartel. The riots of 6th February were for Perret "l'expression de la colère populaire", evidence that "personne ne veut plus de la République des camarades, personne ne veut plus des tripotages, des combinaisons, des étouffements, et des gouvernements des partis".²⁰⁸

The subsequent resignation of Daladier and the return to power of the right under Gaston Doumergue seemed to offer the chance to implement the Federation's programme, for the notion of a link between deflation and reform of the state was widely accepted on the right in France as a whole, and was also the object of a campaign on the part of business interests.²⁰⁹ In the Rhône the tone of Chamber of Commerce motions became openly political.²¹⁰ AICA too questioned the parliamentary

206 *Union républicaine*, 23-4-1933, 30-4-1933, 20-8-1933. *Union républicaine*, 11-2-1934. For Claudius Chaland, President of the 3rd arrondissement committee, the essential problem was not simply to rescue the public finances, but to reform the constitution in a way that would prevent the recurrence of "surprises" such as those of 1924 and 1932.

207 *Union républicaine*, 22-10-1933. In October 1933 Perret wrote that "nous continuerons la bataille jusqu'à la victoire souhaitée qui est pour nous «l'Union nationale»".

208 *Union républicaine*, 11-2-1934.

209 Jackson, op. cit., pp. 88-92. Margairaz, op. cit., passim; The *Nouvelliste*, 23-4-1934 linked constitutional reform, deflation and reform of labour legislation.

210 PVCCL, 8-2-1934. On 8th February the Chamber of Commerce sent a telegram to Doumergue, thanking him for his devotion and expressing the hope that he would succeed in restoring peace and harmony in France.

regime, hoping that moral force would be sufficient to bring about the necessary reforms.²¹¹

The Federation insisted that the inquiry into the Stavisky affair be widened into a veritable purge. He personally urged Minister of Justice Tardieu that "l'occasion est unique je crois de pousser à fond la grande nettoyage".²¹² The notion of "Staviskites" was defined widely enough to include those guilty of the murder of patriots on 6th February, revolutionary teachers and civil service unions. The "cleansing" would also include a "definitive break with the SFIO."²¹³ Nevertheless, Perret still believed that the purge could be carried out by the *Union nationale*.²¹⁴

But by the summer of 1934 the Federation was clearly tiring of parliamentary methods. In the *Réveil du Beaujolais* Alexandre Bosse-Platière wrote that Tardieu had been duped into joining the government, thereby earning an angry rebuke from Tardieu himself.²¹⁵ In August 1934 Victor Perret denounced those who continued to believe in the myth of a "national truce". The reasons for this disillusion are not specific to the Rhône. In the mind of Victor Perret the aggravation of the economic crisis in spite of the Doumergue deflation and Radical opposition to Doumergue's weak programme of constitutional reform were linked. Perret felt that Doumergue's fundamental mistake had been to include the Radicals in the government, but did not explain how a government could be formed without them.²¹⁶ He stated merely that had the programme of purges outlined above been carried out, then the Cartel would have disappeared definitively.²¹⁷ On the fall of Doumergue Perret warned the party: "de telles trahisons ne resteront pas impunies".²¹⁸

Another reason for Perret's disillusion with the *Union nationale* is the rapprochement of socialists and communists and the formation of the *Front commun* in July 1934. This posed an electoral threat to the right, for the communists made gains in the *cantonales* of October 1934. Furthermore, the left engaged in a systematic campaign of disruption of meetings of the leagues, which occasionally spilled over into attacks on the parliamentary right. The most serious was at a gathering held jointly by the Federation and the Alliance for the local elections of October 1934 at a

211 Johannès Dupraz in *Bulletins et documents l'AICA*, November 1934, reprinted in *La République lyonnaise*, 6-1-1934.

212 Tardieu papers, AN AP 324 13, Perret to Tardieu, 24-7-1934. Or Perret to Tardieu, 19-7-1934: "surtout ne lâchez pas ses coquins, car, comme vous le dits si bien, ils ne vous lâcheront place si vous étiez à leur place. Enfin, la confiance ne reviendra pas, tant que justice ne sera pas fait et justice complète [...]."

213 *Union républicaine*, 26-8-1934.

214 *Union républicaine*, 25-3-1934.

215 *Réveil du Beaujolais*, 25-7-1935, 1-8-1934. AN 324 AP 13, Tardieu wrote to Perret, 18-8-1934: "On me communique un article du *Réveil du Beaujolais*, complètement idiot en même temps que discourtois et on me dit que le signataire serait votre représentant pour le Beaujolais". Perret agreed that the article had not been opportune. But he implied that Bosse-Platière had been unable to forget Tardieu's lack of support for the Federation during the previous Parliament.

216 Jeanneney, *De Wendel*, p. 483: De Wendel put forward the same view, which to de Peyerhimoff meant "either inflation or dictatorship. De Wendel replied: "C'est la conclusion à laquelle je suis arrivé depuis un bon moment déjà".

217 *Union républicaine*, 26-8-1934.

218 *Union républicaine*, 18-11-1934. But Perret had not been above a secret electoral deal with Edouard Herriot for the *cantonales* of October, 1934 (AN 317 AP Perret to Marin, 4-1-1937).

café in the 6th arrondissement. About 100 left wingers invaded the café. The meeting degenerated as chairs were thrown and windows smashed. Shots were fired, probably by the communists. There were a number of injuries, some serious, but only two people were slightly hurt by gunshots.²¹⁹ In July Perret had already denounced the government for permitting such a campaign.²²⁰ Were this to continue, Perret warned, conservatives would take the law into their own hands:

Nous ne laisserons pas faire cela. Nous avons conscience de notre devoir d'éclairer les masses, de leur dire la vérité, toute la vérité, et s'il persiste dans son attitude présente, nous nous organiserons pour assurer nous mêmes la défense de nos libertés, car nous ne pouvons accepter plus longtemps de voir assommer presque chaque jour, des hommes, des jeunes gens, dont le seul crime et d'user de leur liberté de citoyen.²²¹

Perret was to repeat such apocalyptic threats on several occasions during the next eighteen months.²²² The prospect of a reunified CGT provoked him to write that "l'heure approche où tous les coupables et les responsables auront à rendre compte de leurs actes criminels. La haute cour, la prison, la destitution civique sont des châtiements légaux et démocratiques".²²³

In view of such threats it is scarcely surprising that Laurent Bonnevey should refer to Perret as "chef des politiciens fascistes du Rhône". As evidence for such a charge one could point to authoritarianism, the appeal to violence, anti-communism, and an undercurrent of xenophobia and even anti-semitism.²²⁴ There is also an anti-elitist and anti-capitalist element in Federation propaganda. The social and political establishment were held responsible for failure to deal with the economic crisis, constitutional reform, the threat from the left and the revived German menace. In July 1934 Perret noted the "total lack of initiative and enterprise among our statesmen".²²⁵ He had little faith in the Doumergue government, and less in those of Flandin or Laval.²²⁶ Big business was denounced for favouring dubious political combinations for short-term gain.²²⁷ Perret argued that the Federation's own programme had been frustrated by a conspiracy of oil companies, banks and insurance companies.²²⁸ Victor Perret, as our discussion of the entente in the silk industry showed, had good rea-

219 AN F² 2667, report of 1-10-1934; *Lyon républicain*, 2-10-1934, 3-10-1934; *Union républicaine*, 7-10-1934. One witness whose car had been hit by a stray bullet claimed to have heard thirty shots. The police estimated four at most. For the *Nouvelliste*, 5-10-1934, the demonstration had been "minutely prepared."

220 "[Le gouvernement] laisse se développer en effet, sur tous les points du territoire, les méfaits du «Front commun» dont le but avoué est d'empêcher toute réunion publique ou privée organisée par les républicains nationaux, mais dont la pensée secrète est de procéder à des essais de révolution".

221 *Union républicaine*, 15-7-1934.

222 For example, *Union républicaine*, 15-7-1934, 15-9-1935: "tous les gens propres et honnêtes de ce pays, tous les vrais républicains s'uniront pour exiger les réformes indispensables dont la première sera la destruction du «Parlementarisme»."

223 *Union républicaine*, 6-10-1935.

224 *Union républicaine*, 14-4-1935: Léon Blum was "l'être invisible mais toujours présent, le malfaiteur né, le juif internationale à l'esprit destructeur, au coeur haineux, le plus grand exploiteur de la misère humaine".

225 *Union républicaine*, 15-7-1934.

226 On Flandin, *Union républicaine*, 24-2-1935: "la faiblesse de notre Premier Ministre actuel dépasse tout imagination". Perret was more sympathetic to Laval, but he too was to be denounced for permitting trades union activity, for dirigism and for being too sympathetic to the Radicals (*Union républicaine*, 18-8-1935).

227 *Union républicaine*, 26-8-1934.

228 *Union républicaine*, 18-8-1935. This was the article to which as we saw in the previous chapter, Auguste Isaac took such great exception.

son for disliking the "puissances d'argent". And he was in personal difficulties with the banks.

In sum, it is possible to see in Perret's brand of conservatism the combination of violence, anti-communism, reaction and hostility to the establishment which characterizes fascism. But for two reasons it stops short of fascism. The first is the Federation was hardly suited to be either the vehicle for a popular mobilization or the instrument of a fascist dictatorship. The existence of such a party is essential to fascism, for it is seen by members as the means by which a new national elite will take power from the discredited establishment. In organizational terms Perret's party was a revamped notable party. It was a part of the establishment, albeit a marginal one. So for all Perret's populism he was himself vulnerable to the attacks of still more radical spokesmen of the people.

Relations between the Federation and the leagues confirm this point. Certainly the violence of Perret's language sanctioned their activity. There were some contacts between Federation and leagues. The party's Villeurbanne committee claimed in March 1934 to be taking the lead in the formation of a "Front National".²²⁹ Perret's followers precipitated a crisis in the Federation by their refusal to vote a *Conseil général* motion for disarmament of the leagues on the grounds that it failed to condemn simultaneously the arming of the left.²³⁰

Yet collaboration between Federation and leagues was surprisingly limited between 1932 and 1936. Federation attendance at meetings of the JP was less common than in previous years.²³¹ One reason might be that in 1935 the JP, were denouncing the *modérés*, calling for the arming of the people and for a "national revolution".²³² Also the JP was now outclassed in terms of membership by the *Croix de Feu*. With the latter organization there was scarcely any public contact.²³³ There were some who were members of both organizations, the most notorious being Pierre Burgeot, who benefited from the secret support of the league in his electoral campaign in 1936.²³⁴ A few *Croix de Feu* militants also appear on Federation lists in the municipal elections of 1935, admittedly in areas where the right had no chance of victory, and

229 ADR 4m 235, Prefect, 31-3-34; *Union républicaine*, 26-8-1934.

230 Another example of such links is that the Paris correspondent of *L'Union républicaine*, Jacques Débu-Bridel (future Left Gaullist deputy), had been a member of *Action française* and the *Faisceau*. He had at one time described himself as a "monarcho-fascist". (H. Coston, *Partis, journeaux et hommes politiques*, Paris, 1960, p. 16).

231 For example, in September 1934 Perret, Sallès and a number of Federation municipal councillors attended a mass celebrated by the abbé Perret at St François de Sales. In February 1935 Perret was on the platform at a Taittinger meeting. *Nouvelliste*, 9-4-1934, 9-2-1935.

232 See Chapter ten.

233 Except that in the early days of the league the *Union républicaine* had published some of its communiqués.

234 They also include the *Conseiller général*, Alexandre Sabarly, who was found to have a *Croix de Feu* badge in his pocket when in 1935 he was arrested for fraud. (He was later acquitted on all charges). On Burgeot see AN 317 AP 88, Burgeot to President of PSF in the 6th arrondissement, 12-5-1938; Burgeot to Marin, 13-5-1938. In the 2nd arrondissement a large proportion of Federation members were also adherents of La Rocque's league (interview with HC).

without any reference to their affiliation to the league.²³⁵ The *Croix de Feu*'s fanatical insistence on its independence is one reason for the absence of public contacts.

As to Perret's private attitude to the leagues, we can only guess. Given his reservations before 1932, his polemics with the PSF from 1936, and the absence of close collaboration with the leagues in the period between, there is little to suggest that Perret saw anything more than a subordinate role for them.²³⁶ The only league which was explicitly condemned was the *Front paysan* of Dorgères, which was seen as encroaching on the terrain of the parties, and as engaging in demagogic opposition to the decree laws of Laval.²³⁷ Since the *Front paysan* was not established in the Rhône the Federation had no need to fear the repercussions of such an attack. So perhaps this was a coded warning to all the leagues. It is most likely that Perret saw the leagues as a means of combat against the left, and was prepared to use them to call to order the feeble conservative establishment. William Irvine is probably correct to argue that the Federation tolerated the leagues as long as they did not encroach on its own terrain.

The second reason why the Federation cannot be seen as fascist is that it never ceased to speak for a narrow section of the ruling class. Certainly Perret's appeal was greater than in the Tardieu period. But the essential problem was that like other organizations the Federation found it difficult to balance and reconcile the contradictory demands of its supporters. This was especially difficult in a party where a narrow group of notables, and above all Perret himself, were responsible for policy. As a result the Federation tended to oscillate between pleas for respect of the general interest and special pleading for the merchant-manufacturing branch of the silk industry.

From time to time the silk industry, unlike any other branch of the Lyonnais economy, was the subject of Perret's weekly editorial in *L'Union républicaine*.²³⁸ No other sector of the economy benefited from this kind of advocacy. His support for free trade put him at odds with most other businessmen, even with some silk manufacturers.²³⁹ Perret also called for a general return to the family workshop.²⁴⁰ This had been one of his reasons for opposition to the Marchandeaup Law, another question on which Perret's views diverged from the majority of businessmen.²⁴¹ He called for a programme of public works, which would include the restoration of national monuments and the tapestries they contained. This would give work to weavers of embroidered

235 Notably the engineer Pierre Combes in the third arrondissement. There were also a couple of lesser *Croix de Feu* militants on the Villeurbanne list.

236 *La République lyonnaise*, 1932. The royalists stated that although the Federation was some times subject to criticism, it was not considered an enemy party.

237 *Union républicaine*, 3-11-1935, 17-11-1935.

238 *Union républicaine*, 18-3-1934 (centenary of Jacquard); 11-1935 (entente in the silk industry); not until 1939 did he go as far as to write a piece directly on his own speciality 29-1-1939 (*La misère de l'industrie de la dorure*).

239 *Union républicaine*, 2-10-1932, 4-12-32, 18-3-1934.

240 *Union républicaine*, 18-3-1934.

241 See page 205.

silks such as those Perret himself produced.²⁴² To finance this project Perret favoured a large national loan. Although he argued that public works would eventually profit the nation, there was no disguising the incompatibility of this measure with financial stability.²⁴³ This simultaneous pressure for deflation and subsidy is typical of the kind of pressure faced by the government, and was a major cause of the crisis of Parliament.

Perret had little to offer the increasingly strident popular constituency of the right. The party's only social policy was mutualization of social insurance. The forty hour week was rejected on the grounds that it would cause big business to increase productivity through "machinism", thereby endangering the artisanate.²⁴⁴ The price support measures demanded by the conservative peasantry were also rejected, Perret advising them, "aide toi, le ciel t'aidera". The Federation took the side of large landowners against the government's wine laws. Shopkeepers were accused of profiteering by the Federation sponsored *Ligue de défense des consommateurs*. Perret envisaged the transformation of shopkeepers into agents of big companies, paid on a commission basis.²⁴⁵ There can be little doubt that the groups concerned, given the heightened sensitivity to professional interests in this period, were aware of the Federation's views.

So the conservatism of Victor Perret cannot be described as fascist. Rather, it represented the populism and authoritarianism of an ultimately narrow section of the Lyonnais elite. The masses were mobilized only in a symbolic sense. He distrusted the genuine mobilization of the leagues. Consequently he was unable to produce the transcendental platform essential to the formation of a genuine "national opposition".

It is perhaps surprising that Victor Perret did not, to this end, exploit his own long-standing commitment to corporatism and the wide popularity of that doctrine in conservative circles. Corporatism continued to form a part of Perret's discourse.²⁴⁶ He approved in principle the idea of corporative organization of the silk industry. He was also aware of the doctrine's integrative potential. It is worth quoting at length his views on the subject for they demonstrate perfectly the function and appeal of corporatism:

Il sera également nécessaire de tenter au plus tôt un rapprochement entre les producteurs de la terre et ceux de l'industrie, car depuis trop longtemps, on les oppose les uns aux autres pour des buts... sur lesquels il est inutile d'insister [sic].

Il n'y pas des fondeurs, des tisseurs, des métallurgistes, des chimistes, des électriciens, des cultivateurs, des viticulteurs, de gros métayers et de petits exploitants, il y a des Français qui travaillent, qui produisent, et tous les intérêts sont solidaires.

²⁴² *Union républicaine*, 9-10-1932.

²⁴³ *Union républicaine*, 3-3-1935, 17-3-1935.

²⁴⁴ *Union républicaine*, 28-1-1934.

²⁴⁵ *Union républicaine*, 16-10-1932. In August 1934 a series of articles appeared attacking bakers for profiteering.

²⁴⁶ *Union républicaine*, 16-10-1932. In 1932, for example, he called for the "resurrection of corporations" as a means of overcoming foreign competition.

Eh bien nous sommes convaincu qu'un rapprochement entre tous les organismes de la production est possible. Nous avons des Chambres de Commerce, des Chambres d'Agriculture, parfaitement qualifiées pour entreprendre cette oeuvre nationale d'une très grande portée économique.

Ce serait au surplus un excellent moyen de limiter un peu, en attendant de la transformer, l'emprise politique sur tous les rouages de la vie même de notre pays.

In this quotation we see the assertion of a mythical national interest and the ascription of division in the nation to outside agents. Typically, however, the national and professional interest would have to be enforced by compulsory membership of the syndicate and the disciplining of "commerçants marrons".²⁴⁷

Yet for all this, corporatism was never more than a sub-theme of Federation propaganda. Apart from Perret few writers in *L'Union républicaine* showed much interest in it. Corporatist ideas appear in only two or three of the dozens of electoral addresses produced by the Federation. More common are defences of liberalism. Even Perret himself did not hold consistently to corporatism, re-asserting on several occasions his allegiance to the liberal tradition.²⁴⁸

One explanation for this paradox is that Perret's corporatism was aimed at the protection of the merchant-manufacturing mode of production.²⁴⁹ Yet we have seen that those most loudly demanding corporatist measures at this time had little interest in the artisanate. Indeed, many of them saw corporatism as a means of developing mass production. This might well have discouraged Perret from pressing to hard his own version of corporatism.

Furthermore, liberalism remained influential in the Federation, reinforced by the fact that most militants read the *Nouvelliste*. We have seen that Beaujolais landowners did not espouse corporatism. Neither did some in the silk industry. The predominant motif in the campaign against the entente project had been the defence of economic liberalism. The chief opponents of the entente were precisely those medium factory producers and *non-usiniers* who were also found supporting Perret's wing of the Federation. It is significant that Perret was much more outspoken on the subject of corporatism when speaking to the Federation's national congress than he was in Lyon.²⁵⁰ There is of course no necessary connection between a desire to preserve luxury industry and corporatism. One Federation militant argued that the laws of supply and demand, based as they were on individual initiative and private property, were ideally suited to a nation of small business, diversity of taste, and quality production.²⁵¹ What Perret did share with liberals of this type was a suspicion of big business and mass production.

²⁴⁷ *Union républicaine*,

²⁴⁸ See for example his advice to farmers on page 229 above, and Chapter eight.

²⁴⁹ See chapter eight.

²⁵⁰ AN 317 AP 82/3, Perret speech on general policy at the 1934 congress of the Federation. Here too Perret stressed that one of the principal aims of his corporatism was to "soustraire l'ouvrier qualifié à l'influence du syndicat révolutionnaire".

²⁵¹ *Union républicaine*, 11-11-1934.

For these reasons Perret tended to fall back on their peculiar brand of liberalism, with its assumption of a natural level of demand which could be ignored only at great risk.²⁵² This enabled him to attribute the crisis to a moral imbalance. For Perret, “On ne viole pas impunément, en effet, les lois de la morale, de la nature, pas plus que la tradition et celles-ci furent trop longtemps remplacées par la spéculation sous toutes ses formes, les bénéfices illicites, l’immoralité dans les affaires, la théorie du moindre effort, la soif immodérée du gain et du plaisir.”²⁵³ If such reasoning was accepted then there was no need to discuss concrete issues. In December 1934 Perret stated that he could not pronounce on wine and wheat prices because he lacked appropriate qualifications—a disability which had not excluded him from membership of the *Comice agricole* of Lamure. The Federation’s manifesto for the senatorial elections of 1935, put forward no agricultural programme at all, even though a large proportion of delegate represented rural communes. It was simply asserted that town and country had a common interest.²⁵⁴

The disadvantage of such a strategy was that it did not have the wide appeal of corporatist doctrine, with its ability to proclaim the primacy of profession and nation, whilst simultaneously permitting the illusion that individual interests too would be satisfied. In the eyes of many on the right the Federation remained elitist and egotistical. In 1936 a PDP writer urged voters not to support

le Parti dont toute la politique économique n’est que la **cristallisation** autour de privilèges abusifs de la **peur** que ressentent justement cette poignée d’individus - on les appelle les «DEUX CENTS» - qui redoutent d’être dépossédés de ces scandaleux privilèges - pour ce Parti enfin dont la **collusion** déclarée avec les mouvements fascistes [...] est une **insulte** à votre fidélité républicain - et un élément de **guerre civil demain**.²⁵⁵

The collaboration of the Federation with the leagues was not, however, as close as many imagined. Indeed, the leagues increasingly tended to criticise the Federation in the same terms as the PDP, seeing it as an emanation of big capital and a failed political class. The *Croix de Feu* had never been willing to be a tool of the Federation. Victor Perret had played the role of sorcerer’s apprentice.

The Centre right: Between Popular Front and Authoritarianism

The Centre right was not immune from the pressures which pushed the Federation to the far right. Both Christian democratic and the lay centre rights experienced difficulties as a result of the economic sectionalism and political polarization of the depression. Minorities in both were touched by anti-parliamentarianism. The Republican tradition of the centre right was not necessarily a barrier to authoritarianism. Most militants, however, did remain faithful to the democratic tradition. Indeed, they es-

²⁵² See page 238 for Isaac’s views.

²⁵³ *Union républicaine*, 17-2-1935.

²⁵⁴ *Union républicaine*, 4-12-1932, 13-10-1935.

²⁵⁵ *Trait d’union des démocrates populaires du Rhône*, April, 1936. Bold text in the original.

caped from the difficulties in which they found themselves by making a fetish of Republicanism.

Take first the PDP. There is no need to go into the social and economic policies of the Christian democrats during this period, for they closely resemble those of the CFTC. The slump was attributed to liberal materialism; the solution was said to be democratic corporatism based on free trades unionism under state arbitration. Like the CFTC the PDP in the Rhône occupied an equivocal position on the margins of the right. It was pushed to the left by the material grievances of its largely white collar rank and file, while its integration into the social Catholic network, which permitted articulation of and shaped those grievances in the first place, tied the party to the right. An additional problem faced by the PDP was that of any movement claiming to represent the lower middle class in a period of social polarization. Themes such as popular democracy, "les classes moyennes", and the dual opposition to big capital and Marxism, were features which drew the PDP towards the Radicals. But with the exception of democracy these ideas were also shared by the extreme right. We saw in the case of small business that Radical ideology might provide, in certain circumstances, a bridge to the far right. The same applies to the PDP. This does not mean that the PDP was proto-fascist, but that in some circumstances it was difficult to hold a centrist line. Whether this leads to a rightwards or leftwards shift also depends on context. The question has to be addressed because after June 1936 the PDP in the Rhône collapsed.

One example of the uncertainty of the PDP is provided by Jules Maire, editor of the *Petit Montagnard de Tarare*. A member also of the Federation until late 1935, Maire was on the right of Christian democracy. In the month before the collapse of the Cartel Maire had been calling for "pitiless cuts" in government spending, and for assertion of the authority of the state against "feudalisms large and small" in much the same way as Victor Perret had done. He approved of the riots of 6th February, denying that they were the work of fascists: "les anciens combattants sont bien du Peuple tout court et non tributaires des organismes politiques".²⁵⁶ Maire also called for a "government of Public Safety". Yet its members were to be centrist politicians such as Doumergue, Flandin, Herriot and Laurent Bonnevay. Furthermore, Maire approved of the anti-fascist strike of 12th February, a useful warning, as he saw it, to those right wing extremists who had attempted to exploit the events of 6th February.²⁵⁷ Over the next months Maire's views emerged from this flux. He backed Bonnevay, although at times somewhat reluctantly, in his struggle against Victor Perret. Maire, although tempted by authoritarianism, remained on the moderate right. But it is possible nev-

²⁵⁶ *Petit Montagnard de Tarare*, 3-12-1933, 14-1-1934, 11-2-1934.

²⁵⁷ *Petit Montagnard de Tarare*, 11-2-1934, 18-2-1934.

ertheless to see that belief in centrism could, in some circumstances, lead on to hostility to "politicians" who divided France between right and left.

One PDP militant who did launch frankly into authoritarianism was Maurice Vicaire. Vicaire was a municipal councillor in the 6th arrondissement, as well as secretary general of the *Cartel des combattants*.²⁵⁸ In 1936 he stood as a veterans' candidate in order to protest against the theft of their victory of 6th February. He denounced "l'esprit politicienne qui empoisonne notre ville", and called for budgetary deflation, reform of the state, corporatism as a means of protecting small property against capitalism, and for national unity in the face of the revival of Germany. He gained 15% of the vote.²⁵⁹

Simultaneously the left of the PDP progressed. In Cours the PDP section joined with the CFTC in opposing wage cuts in the blanket industry, thereby earning the distrust of local employers. This campaign contributed to the election of the PDP leader Dr. Lheritier to represent the canton of Thizy in the *Conseil général* in October 1934, and the capture of the *mairie* of Cours from the left.²⁶⁰ In Lyon members of the party's youth groups were reported to have been seen at Popular Front meetings.²⁶¹ In the city the left of the PDP was led by the *lycée* professor, Jacques Bonnet, Secretary-general of the Rhône federation. Typically, Bonnet explained that he was in accord with the Popular front on the main elements of his programme—international peace, social reform and defence of the Republic against the leagues.²⁶² But he did not join the Popular Front because it was an electoral manoeuvre which masked communist plans for class struggle and revolution.²⁶³

Consisting of a cluster of parties, committees, interest groups and individuals united only by their central position in politics, the lay centre right was perhaps more vulnerable to sectionalism and polarization than the Christian democrats. By 1934 the *Alliance démocratique* was hopelessly riven by factions. Some were tempted by the far right. Here too it was possible to turn aspects of the party's ideology to the far right, once, of course, they were detached from democracy.

This is evident in the ephemeral youth group of the Alliance, which was active in 1933. One of its two founders, René Bouteille, had previously been a member of the JP. The basic idea was that the Alliance should reconcile Frenchmen over the heads of the old parties which had broken apart under the force of new ideas. This would create a strong France able to stand up to Germany.²⁶⁴ There is, to be sure,

²⁵⁸ The *Cartel de Cobattants* linked the two main national veterans' associations, the UNC and the *Union fédérale*.

²⁵⁹ *Nouvelliste*, 12-4-1936, 15-4-1936, 16-4-1936, 18-4-1936, 22-4-1936.

²⁶⁰ *Petit Montagnard*, 9-9-1934, 13-1-1935. The PDP also backed strikers at Thizy in January, 1935 (*Petit Montagnard*, 1-1-1935).

²⁶¹ *Nouveau Journal*, 14-7-1935.

²⁶² *Trait d'union*, April, 1936.

²⁶³ *Trait d'union*, April, 1936.

²⁶⁴ *Sud-est républicain*, October and November 1933.

nothing inherently anti-democratic about this. But this kind of thinking might nevertheless have smoothed the passage to the far right of men like Emile Roux. Roux, a manager in a silk firm, was a municipal councillor in the 6th arrondissement and President of the Lyon section of the conservative veterans' organization, the UNC. In 1936 he and a group of veterans stood as "candidats de principe" in the general election. Roux himself stood against François Peissel. They presented themselves as "old soldiers without links to the *Croix de Feu*". In 1937 Roux joined the *Parti populaire français*.²⁶⁵

Such an itinerary was not typical of centre right militants, though in 1936 its electorate turned to the Federation. Between 1932 and 1934 the Alliance did move to the right. In the general election of 1932 Mansuy represented both Alliance and Federation in the 6th arrondissement.²⁶⁶ Yet as Perret became more extreme relations declined. Perret charged Mansuy with opposition to the inclusion of Marin in the government, and with support for the legacy of Briand, which, Perret argued, had produced Hitler. The centre right had failed to agree to "punishment of all swindlers", and had opposed the deflation and tax reductions required by industry and agriculture.²⁶⁷

This implies that the lay centre right, or at least elements within it, were reluctant to break all ties with the left, and even retained some sympathy for reform. Centre right politicians defended existing labour legislation. Now that François Peissel had moved towards the right,²⁶⁸ the effective leader of the reformist right in the Rhône was Laurent Bonnevey. In his Monts du Beaujolais constituency Bonnevey moved ever closer to the PDP.²⁶⁹ Like the Christian democrats Bonnevey opposed salary reductions.²⁷⁰ Such policies did not endear him to local employers. When Victor Perret set up a committee of the Federation in Tarare, all but one of the numerous industrialists on Bonnevey's committee deserted to the new body.²⁷¹

The centre right was also deeply suspicious of constitutional reform. Firstly, this was because supporters of reform linked it to social reaction. Secondly, the centre right derived its whole *raison d'être* from its central position in Parliament and its access to state power and patronage. This is no doubt one of the reasons for Laurent

265 *Cour de Justice*, 1989, dossier Roux; ADR *élections législatives de 1936*.

266 *Nouveau Journal*, 25-4-1932. It included constitutional reform, public expenditure cuts to be determined by an extra-parliamentary commission, and criticisms of the privileges of civil servants. Where the programme differed from that of Perret was in a call for profit sharing and in the absence of a demand, found in all Federation manifestoes, for mutualization of social insurance, even though this measure now figured in the national programme of the Alliance.

267 *Union républicaine*, 5-5-1935.

268 Peissel nonetheless continued to defend the principle of obligatory insurance in a single regime. (*Nouveau Journal*, 5-5-1935).

269 *Petit Montagnard*, 9-9-1934: Dr. Lheritier underlined the community of ideas which united the Cours PDP section to their deputy.

270 *Petit Montagnard*, 9-9-1934. In a speech of September 1934 he argued, like the left, that wage cuts worsened the crisis by reducing purchasing power. A Federation militant, on the other hand, felt that only bistros would benefit from augmented purchasing power, and that the race would perish as a result. (*Union républicaine*, 3-11-1935).

271 *Petit Montagnard*, 23-12-1934, 13-1-1935.

Bonnevay's defence of *scrutin d'arrondissement*. A list system would have deprived Bonnevay of the ability to bring state power to the Monts du Beaujolais.

There is then, evidence that the issues which had divided the right in the Tardieu period remained alive. Yet in general the polemics between Federation and centre right in this period did not centre on such issues. The main theme of the latter was in fact defence of the Republic.²⁷² Bonnevay claimed in a speech of welcome to Prime Minister Flandin in 1935 the *conseil généraal* was the expression of a profoundly Republican people, which held itself ready to break any attempt to impose "personal power": "les Républicains lyonnais et beaujolais se divisent quand ils dissertent ils unissent pour agir".²⁷³ Political divisions were therefore superficial. Just as Victor Perret, confronted by political conflict and class struggle fell back on a Catholic moralism, so Laurent Bonnevay resuscitated the archaic language of Waldeck-Rousseau. There was even a revival of the quarrel over *laïcité*. Perret denounced Eugène Mansuy for having asserted in at prize-giving for the public schools of the 6th arrondissement that there had been no popular education before Jules Ferry.²⁷⁴ Unable to contend with a deep crisis, both Federation and Alliance sought harmony and stability in the rhetoric of the epoch in which they had emerged. Both, after all, were led by men who had reached maturity during the Church state conflicts of the 1900s. Gramsci's pessimistic judgement of the French right is not entirely wide of the mark as far as the Rhône is concerned:

French parties are [...] all mummified and anachronistic—historico-political documents of the various phases of past French history, whose outdated terminology they continue to repeat; their crisis could become even more catastrophic than that of the German parties.²⁷⁵

By 1935 the parliamentary right was entirely incapable of uniting against the Popular Front.

The divisions of the Parliamentary Right

Until late 1934 relations between conservative parties in the Rhône were fairly good. The crisis in the Federation in 1929 and 1930 did not prevent the right and centre right from putting forward single candidates in all constituencies but the Beaujolais in the general elections of 1932.²⁷⁶

All the same, Perret's establishment of control over the Federation had begun to change things. Already in the 6th arrondissement the setting up of a separate Federation committee in 1931 had led to difficulties. In the *cantonales* of that year the Alliance and Federation were unable to agree upon a single candidate. Mansuy withdrew

²⁷² Or issues of trivial importance such as Bonnevay's allegation that Perret had borne a grudge against him ever since he had refused to back a Perret as candidate to the *conseil d'arrondissement* in Lamure.

²⁷³ Bonnevay, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

²⁷⁴ *Union républicaine*, 3-11-1935. And for voting in favour of a *Conseil général* subsidy to a lay education group.

²⁷⁵ Gramsci, *op. cit.*, p. 211. The passage dates from 1933 or 1934.

²⁷⁶ There had, however, been rumblings in the PDP, some members of which felt that too many concessions had been made to the right. *Bulletin des "Démocrates Populaires"*, January, 1929.

on the second ballot without advising a vote for the Federation, and openly voted for the Radicals.²⁷⁷

The turning point came in the late summer of 1934, coinciding with Perret's change of tack and the emergence of the *Croix de Feu*. The issue which precipitated conflict was Laurent Bonnevey's role as President of the Parliamentary Commission of inquiry into the events of 6th February.²⁷⁸ After the Commission reported in December Perret launched an attack on Bonnevey, whose view that the 6th February had represented a fascist plot was soon to be put forward in a book. From this point on Victor Perret, Bonnevey and others were engaged in a continuous polemic.²⁷⁹

The conflict had repercussions on the *Conseil général*. In October 1934 the right had, for the first time in the Third Republic, gained a majority in this body. Laurent Bonnevey became President, at the head of a broad conservative majority. But in August 1935 the conservative majority split over the question of the leagues. Perret was scandalized that only five Federation councillors had voted against a motion condemning "factious leagues", but saying nothing of the communists. Three conservatives voted in favour.²⁸⁰ In October Bonnevey put up a centre right list against that of the Federation in the Senate elections. A month later the breach in the conservative majority on the *conseil général* was confirmed, as the Federation's representatives were evicted. A new majority including the SFIO elected a bureau of Alliance and Radical members. Bonnevey retained the Presidency.²⁸¹

Not surprisingly the right fought the general election of 1936 in the greatest of confusion. Candidates were chosen only after an unprecedented degree of faction fighting. According to the police Laurent Bonnevey was behind manoeuvres to present a centre right candidate against François Peissel, and was conspiring with Herriot to present an anti-Popular Front Radical in the 2nd. Neither of these efforts bore fruit.²⁸² Bonnevey himself faced a challenge in his own constituency from Victor Perret, who mounted what he called "a punitive expedition". Bonnevey was viewed sympathetically by the communists, while *Action française* aided Perret.²⁸³

The situation was most confused in the 6th arrondissement. Here the Federation chose Pierre Burgeot only because it could find no-one better. Also competing for the right wing vote were an Independent Radical and an ex-PDP veterans' candi-

277 *Nouvelliste*, 12-9-1931; *Union républicaine*, 3-11-1935.

278 At first Victor Perret had expressed pride that one of the Rhône Federation's *élues* should occupy such a position. But as it became clear that the Commission would not be part of the purge demanded by Perret, he began to have second thoughts.

279 During the municipal elections of June 1935 Federation was condemned by the courts for not allowing Bonnevey his right of reply.

280 Against: Bosse-Platière, Sallès, Parrel, Burgeot and Sabarly (all Federation). Abstained: Anier, De Lescure, Nicolas (FR); Augros, Mercier (AD), Maire (FR/PDP). For: Lheritier (PDP), Delorme, Mansuy (AD).

281 Bonnevey, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-78.

282 ADR *élections législatives*, 1936, reports of 14-11-1935, 183-1936.

283 *Nouvelliste*, 14-4-1936: "Si vous êtes amateur de réunions électorales, ne restez pas à Lyon, elles y sont ternes et manquent d'imprévu... Allez plutôt faire un tour dans la deuxième circonscription de Villefranche... Vous assisterez sûrement à une jolie bagarre".

ADR *élections législatives*, 1936, Lheritier to Prefect on obstruction of AF at Bonnevey meetings.

date. The Alliance, egged on by Bonnevey, put forward no candidate at all, its aim being to present Mansuy on the second ballot. This plan, however, backfired. With the conservative vote split, Burgeot was far enough ahead of his conservative rivals on the first ballot to make his withdrawal impossible. So unedifying was the confusion in the 6th that there were rumours that business was ready to impose unity by putting forward an "economic" candidate.²⁸⁴

Whereas the right had presented a single candidate in thirteen out of fourteen Rhône constituencies in 1928, and 1932, there were competing conservative candidates in six constituencies in 1936. Nevertheless, the right gained a few percent in terms of votes, and five right wingers were elected. 1919 excepted this was the best conservative result in the Rhône since 1871. With the return of Sallès and Peissel to the fold and the election of Burgeot, Perret too had reason to congratulate himself. Yet within a year the Federation, and indeed the parliamentary right as a whole, was widely believed to be facing extinction.²⁸⁵

Conclusion

Victor Perret had gained from the polarization which occurred at the end of the 1930s, but his triumph masked the deep crisis in which the right found itself, a crisis which led to the growth of the leagues. The main elements of this crisis were as follows.

1. The right was divided in the long-term by religion and attitudes to industrialization. These tensions came together in the conflict over conservative reformism between 1928 and 1932.
2. The economic crisis, a traumatic and long-lasting experience from the point of view of employers in particular, caused existing antagonisms to be pursued with new vigour and gave rise to a host of new ones. As a result professional bodies, political parties and even governments were either paralysed or buffeted between interest groups. Many saw a combination of corporatism and authority as a means of re-integrating (in their own image), a divided society. Liberalism was now favoured only by a minority.
3. A related source of authoritarianism was that businessmen generally agreed on the need to reduce wages, social costs and taxes. The Parliamentary system appeared to be an obstacle to this deflationary programme. The formation of the Popular Front and the revival of trades union activity in 1935 confirmed them in the belief that strong action was needed. Some employers, whilst still subscribing to the above programme, were nonetheless prepared to collaborate with the left for pragmatic reasons—yet another source of division.

284 ADR *élections législatives*, 1936, reports of 5-12-1935, 22-2-1936, 1-3-1936. *République lyonnaise*, 1-2-1936, 18-4-1936: reported that Johannès Dupraz, Aymé Bernard and C-J Gignoux, all linked to AICA, were spoken of as candidates.

285 Gains in votes were partly due to the absence of a Radical candidate in Bonnevey's constituency, while Elmi-gar would not have won had the socialist candidate in the Croix Rousse not refused to withdraw. All the same,

4. There was a mobilization of peasants, small businessmen and to a lesser extent white collar workers, all of whom were becoming detached from their traditional leaders. Whilst peasants were attracted to the far right, the two latter groups hesitated between the two camps.

5. The Parliamentary right was ill-fitted in organizational or ideological terms to cope with the crisis. Politicians, seemed either to be at the service of sectional interests, or to engage in sterile and irrelevant polemics.

6. The same kind of crisis had paralysed the parliamentary system itself. This could best be seen in the contradictions of financial policy. As early as September 1932 the Prefect of the Allier reported to the government that

Le public comprend bien qu'il n'existe qu'une seule solution, c'est la compression des dépenses, mais sachant que nul ne veut jouer le rôle de bouc émissaire et que les parlementaires, pour des raisons d'intérêt personnel, seront dans l'impossibilité morale de voter les mesures qui leur seront demandées. On s'attend à des chutes successives des ministères jusqu'à une aggravation plus accentuée de la situation.²⁸⁶

Even Pierre Laval's "superdeflationary" government of 1935 fell victim to the logic of the situation. His government disguised public spending in special accounts, breached the legal ceiling on the issue of treasury bills intervened in the wheat, wine and sugar markets in order to maintain prices and as we have seen sponsored a price-fixing cartel in the silk industry.²⁸⁷ The parliamentary state was in crisis; the way was open for a new kind of political movement practising a new kind of politics.

²⁸⁶ Quoted in Howlett, *op. cit.*, chapter 1.

²⁸⁷ Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-88, 105-110.

Chapter nine

The extreme right, 1928-36

By the mid-1930s bourgeois society in the Rhône was deep in crisis. There was discontent with existing political representation and the parliamentary system. There was a widespread belief that the regime would have to give way to a more authoritarian order, though this would not necessarily mean a break with democracy. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the main features of the leagues which flourished in these circumstances, and to place them in the context of conservative politics in the Rhône. Two points of wider significance will also be examined. The first is the question of whether or not the leagues were fascist. The answer obviously depends upon interpretation of the largest league, the *Croix de Feu*. The view adopted here is that the league did represent a variety of fascism, albeit a moderate one. Secondly, we have to explain why in spite of the crisis of French society, the leagues did not come to power. It will be argued that failure was not inevitable.

Fascism

The leagues have been seen in five ways:

1. As a version of the presidential democracy typified by Gaullism. This is one version of the Bonapartist argument. It is not explicitly formulated by any historian, but appears to underly some of the arguments of Pierre Milza and René Rémond.
2. As a variety of anti-democratic conservatism, which is not fascist because it defends the interests of the so-called traditional elites. Fascism, on the other hand, is revolutionary. Another version of the Bonapartist theory, this is one of the definitions proposed by René Rémond. This is perhaps also what Pierre Milza has in mind when he describes the *Croix de Feu* as resembling the paternalist Catholic social ideas of Dollfus in Austria.
3. As a modern mass conservative party, contrasting in these terms with the old elitist right. This is the argument of W. Irvine in his book on the *Fédération républicaine*.
4. As the pursuit of social and economic conservatism by violent and authoritarian rather than democratic means. For Robert Soucy and in the recent work of W. Irvine, this amounts to fascism.
5. As an expression of the interests of monopoly capital, which uses the fascist party to manipulate the petty bourgeoisie. This is the classic Comintern view of fascism, upheld in a modernized version by the French Communist Party.

Empirical analysis shows that none of these interpretations fits the *Croix de Feu*. Whilst, however, it is not too difficult to say what the leagues were not, it is rather more difficult to say positively what they were. A definition of fascism is of

course crucial. An acceptable one has first of all to take account of the fact that not all forms of right wing authoritarianism are fascist. It also has to account for both the revolutionary and reactionary aspects of fascism, yet at the same time avoid presenting fascism as a movement equally hostile to left and right.¹ One prerequisite is a definition which comprises not just a typology, but also a theory of the origins of fascism, relating it to the nature of the societies in which it appears.

The starting point is a society undergoing significant structural change, whilst at the same time profoundly divided by class conflict, regional imbalances, religious, ideological and political antagonisms. Existing political institutions suffer from chronic difficulties in coping with the contradictory demands emanating from various sections of society. There is therefore a long-term crisis of the hegemony of the ruling class. To these difficulties can be added the de-stabilizing impact of economic crisis, the perception of a serious threat to the nation's position in the international sphere and of a danger from the left. The development of such a crisis, in one department, has been described in the previous chapters. We have seen a growing lack of confidence in political parties and national institutions. There were demands for respect for the national interest and for restoration of state authority.²

Fascism does not inevitably arise from such circumstances, let alone come to power. Rather there are a range of overlapping solutions. What they have in common is the appeal to authority. Even the left agreed that the crisis could not be resolved without coercion. Marcel Déat urged the establishment of a strong state; after 6th February 1934 the left in general demanded suppression of the leagues.

The first kind of conservative response might simply be a demand for the strengthening of the executive. Such a form of government could perhaps be described as "Bonapartist", but "presidential" would probably be a more appropriate term. In France in the 1930s such demands came from many quarters, including the centre right.

A second response could be for representatives of the political or social elites to espouse a variety of authoritarianism which does not accept democracy in either political or social relations. The anti-parliamentarianism of the Chamber of Commerce could fall into this category. There might be an anti-elitist and populist strand in the ideology of the groups concerned, but it remains within certain limits, as it did in the case of the Federation of Victor Perret. This kind of authoritarianism is some-

1 The argument which follows relies heavily upon E. Laclau, "Fascism and Ideology", in *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, London, 1977, and on Geoff Eley, "What produces Fascism: Preindustrial Traditions or Crisis of the Capitalist State?", *Politics and Society*, 12, 1983, pp. 53-82. One does not have to accept the Althusserian problematic of the former in particular to see the value of these two essays.

2 It is important to understand that this does not mean that fascism, or any other of the responses to this crisis are socially or politically neutral. On the contrary, the crisis is experienced differently by all groups. Authoritarianism, presented in terms of the respect for the general interest, is always coupled to vigorous pursuit of special interests. For example we have seen that business authoritarianism was related to the desire to roll back social reform, while small businessmen saw the state as subject to the occult influence of the *puissances d'argent*.

times related to the so-called "traditional elites". But in fact there is no automatic connection with such a group. Rather, it can be espoused by any section of the elite, depending on context.

In any case, the notion of a "traditional elite" is a nebulous one, sometimes used as a euphemism for a feudal ruling class, and sometimes simply to refer to the more conservative sections of a capitalist class. The concept of traditional authoritarianism can be used only with much qualification in a country like France where the feudal mode of production was long since dead. Victor Perret was not globally hostile to the modern world or to modern ideas. In what sense could the Legitimist Marius Berliet, owner of one of the largest factories in France, be said to represent a "traditional elite"? "Traditional authoritarianism" is best understood as the survival of a set of ideological attitudes. They might best endure in certain social groups, but might also be espoused by others, and are also much modified by contact with capitalism and by the emergence of the radical right. Traditional authoritarianism provides a fund of ideas and organizational resources from which the extreme right in general draws sustenance. This was one of the functions of *Action française*.

Fascism, then, represents only one possible response to crisis. Whereas the varieties of authoritarianism discussed so far are ultimately elitist, fascism is best understood as a movement of "radical conservatism" which combines anti-elitism and mass mobilization. It derives from a feeling among rank and file supporters of the right that both political and social elites have failed to meet the material needs of the masses, to deal with the left, and to secure the nation's position in the wider world. It is therefore a revolt for ultimately conservative purposes, and is strongly hostile to the left, it is also radically hostile to "the establishment".

Fascism is therefore a movement of economic, social, organizational and ideological contradictions. Ideologically it claims to re-assert the primacy of the national interest and to eliminate dissident elements, defined in racial or other terms. It is simultaneously elitist and anti-elitist in that this task would be carried out by a new elite, selected on the basis of merit (distinguished as much by war service as by professional capacity). In organizational terms fascism involves a new kind of mass politics based on both popular participation and submission to a leader. The old parties are seen as an unrepresentative clique. Socially, fascism includes the combination of anti-capitalism and anti-socialism characteristic of some sections of the petty bourgeoisie. But fascism is not reducible to a revolt of the lower middle class. The fascist movement includes a range of groups, from those on the fringes of the political establishment, perhaps definable as the "outs", through the petty bourgeoisie, to conservative elements in the working class.³ One of the principal features of the appeal of fas-

3 See G. Eley, *Reshaping the German Right*, passim.

cism is its apparent ability to “reconcile” a great variety of sectional interests with the nation.⁴

The success of fascism is not inevitable. Two factors can be emphasized. First, to come to power in both Italy and Germany fascism was dependent upon an alliance with other types of authoritarianism, and on the presence of the “friends in high places”. For this reason fascist movements form alliances with conservatives, and may themselves include conservatives in their own ranks. In France a fascist-conservative alliance did not emerge. Big business and parliamentary conservatives hesitated, but in the end did not turn to fascism.⁵ Second, Fascism thrives best where it is able to attack an already weakened left. In such circumstances elements of the left may join the fascists, thereby reinforcing the radical tone of the movement. In France the left developed a more effective anti-fascist strategy than in Italy or Germany.

The Sociology of the Leagues

It is important to make clear the nature and limitations of the samples used for analysis of the sociology of the leagues. Each presents unique problems. In the case of *Action française* the 145 individuals for whom profession is known represent only 30% of the names found in the sources, mainly because they were rarely associated with an indication of residence, and because many were students, and for that reason not on the electoral list. Table 15, however, suggests that as far as is measurable the final sample is a reasonable approximation to the original one.⁶ The table gives the percentages of four groups which can be identified in both sources by their titles, or in the case of students by membership of a special section. The differences are minimal. Even the proportion of students is similar in both sources, and moreover is close to an estimate of seven percent given by a former member of the league.⁷

Table 15: Representativeness of <i>Action française</i> sample		
	Press	Sample
Aristocrats	4.9	4.9
Particule	12.0	9.0
Doctors	4.9	3.4
Students	5.1	4.8

4 As Geoff Eley puts it fascism involves “radical authoritarianism, militarized activism, and the drive for a centralized repressive state, with a radical nationalist, communalist, frequently racist creed, and with a violent antipathy for both liberal democracy and socialism”. This paragraph as a whole relies upon G. Eley, “What Produces Fascism?”.

5 On the problematic relations of fascists and conservatives see M. Blinkhorn, “Allies, Rivals or Antagonists? Fascists and Conservatives in Modern Europe”, in M. Blinkhorn (ed.), *Fascists and Conservatives*, London, 1990. It is argued that whilst fascism dominated the alliance in only Germany and to a lesser extent Italy, there were many other regimes where there was a subordinate fascist element, such as Spain.

6 This, of course, does not mean that either sample is a faithful reflection of the real membership of the league.

7 A. Fleuret, “L’extrême droite dans le Rhône, 1929-39”, mémoire de maîtrise, Lyon II, 1979, p. 21. Interview with Joë Faure. The explanation for this is probably that the difficulty of identifying students in the electoral list is compensated by the tendency for those lists to conserve occupation at the time of inscription.

For the JP and *Croix de Feu* it was possible to constitute only small samples. Few names were collected from the sources, and residence, essential for identification in the electoral lists, is hardly ever given. Thanks to the relative marginality of the JP this is not too serious, but the *Croix de Feu* are a different matter. Almost clandestine in character, the latter published only five numbers of its journal from January 1934 to April 1936, of which only three survive. Few communiqués were released to the press. Police reports on the *Croix de Feu* in the Rhône have survived neither in local nor national archives. The only option was to constitute a sample of fifty-three individuals by looking up in the PSF sample the 114 *Croix de Feu* members cited in the sources. This method has obvious drawbacks, for it cannot be assumed that *Croix de Feu* militants joined the PSF. The sample also comprises groups which were not representative of the league as a whole—departmental leaders and those cited in the press because of their involvement in violent incidents. Nonetheless, the method does appear to produce coherent results, which do not diverge markedly from what is known of the national recruitment of the league.

Numbers

It is possible to build up a fairly accurate picture of the numerical strength of the leagues. Scattered information in police reports and the press can be compared with the number of JP and AF members in our own sample of militants. The latter is broken down by year in Graph 24.⁸ Some gaps are filled by Table 16, which shows participation in annual Jeanne d'Arc parades.⁹ Figures in normal print are police figures, while those in italics are from the press. Police figures were normally preferred, but where they are lacking or clearly wrong, press accounts have been used instead.¹⁰

Comparison of Graph 24 and Table 16 shows that from 1928 until 1934 the extreme right was dominated by the AF and JP. Within this period it is noticeable that when AF did well the JP did badly and *vice versa*. This suggests if not actual interchange of members, then at least recruitment in the same milieu. The question of whether a dictator should be elected or hereditary did not, it seems, much matter to some. When conditions for the extreme right began to improve in 1933 the JP and AF

8 Because sample size for the JP is small, it has for this analysis been enlarged by including all those individuals cited in the press regardless of whether or not they could be tied down to a particular arrondissement or commune. The graph is not a good guide to the strength of JP and AF in relation to each other, only of change in the two leagues over time.

9 AN F⁷ 13 306, Fête Jeanne d'Arc. This method was used by the Interior Ministry itself to keep an eye on the far right. The figures are from ADR 1m 172, fêtes publiques, and from various newspapers, in particular *La République Lyonnaise*, *La Flèche*, *Le Nouvelliste*.

10 The *Action française* figure for 1931 is taken from the party press. However, given that league and police estimates for the following year are identical, it may not be greatly exaggerated. The estimate for 1935 for the royalists comes from Anti-fascist journal, *La Flèche*, which usually gave figures a little below those of the police.

The police figure for the JP in 1935 was 500. This is almost certainly too high. The figure of 210 comes from the usually reliable anti-fascist journal, *La Flèche*.

The police gave a figure of 100 for the Bonapartists—almost certainly a typing error. *La Flèche* counted only three, the *Nouvelliste* described a delegation.

were already suffering from the competition of the *Croix de Feu*. The two leagues enjoyed

a

Graph 24: Militants of the Extreme Right, 1928 to 1939

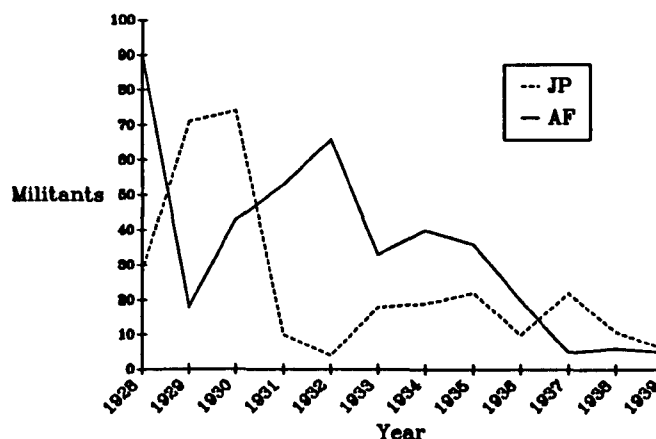


Table 16: Participants in Jeanne d'Arc Demonstrations, 1931-1939

	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1938 ¹¹	1939
CF	del	del	del	550	2,500	4,000	15,000	4,500
AF	1,000	?	?	900	500	430	x	213
JP	del	del	?	200	210	?	?	?
SF	x	x	x	35	100	?	x	x
Fr	x	x	x	30	0	?	x	x
PPF	x	x	x	x	x	x	190	del
Bpts	?	?	?	10	10	?	?	20

Bpts = Bonapartists; CF = *Croix de Feu*/PSF; SF = *Solidarité Française*; JP = *Jeunesses patriotes*; Fr = *Françistes*; del = delegation.

brief swan-song in late 1933 and 1934. But from 1935 both JP and AF declined both absolutely and relative to the *Croix de Feu*. No other group profited from the growth in public sympathy for the extreme right after 1934. *Solidarité française* and the *Françistes* managed no more than a foothold and a toehold respectively.¹²

Thanks to the vigilance of the police it is possible to put total AF membership in the agglomeration at 1,100 in 1928.¹³ The prefect reported in 1933 that the local royalist journal *La République Lyonnaise* was read only by those “already won over

11 Figures for 11th November parade of 1938. The Joan of Arc parade was banned in 1937 and 1938.

12 AN F⁷ 13 238. A report of the Interior Ministry on the national strength of *Solidarité française*, probably compiled in 1934, describes the Lyonnais section as “embryonic”, though the party press asserted the existence of no less than ten sections, covering Lyon, Villeurbanne, Villefranche and Tarare.

13 AN F⁷ 13 205, 17-11-28. This is close to the 1,200 and 1,500 members cited by two former members of the movement who were interviewed in 1979. A. Fleuret, op. cit., p. 21. No date is attached to the membership figures cited.

to royalist doctrines". But the evidence supports Eugen Weber's view that the influence of AF was out of proportion to its size. The police reported 3,000 at a meeting of Maurras in February 1928, in spite of appeals by Cardinal Maurin for Catholics to stay away. Eleven months later René Benjamin drew 2,000 to a conference. In the audience was Federation Deputy Antoine Sallès.¹⁴

No independent estimate of membership of the JP could be found. In 1929 Marcel Didier, President of the Lyon section, claimed 1,200 members, but complained that only 200-300 regularly attended meetings.¹⁵ These figures are consistent with a claim of 500 members in the JP's *Phalange universitaire*, if the league's statement that half its adherents were students is accepted.¹⁶ It is unlikely, however, that the JP was equal in size to AF, as these figures would imply. Their arrondissement sections never had even the limited vitality of those of the royalists, while JP leaders had a fraction of AF's crowd-pulling power: police informers counted 500 persons at meetings with Taittinger and Henri de Kérillis in 1928 and 1929.¹⁷ It is reasonable to guess that membership of the JP was somewhere between 500 and 800 in the in its best years.¹⁸ Nonetheless, because of the JP's contacts with the parliamentary right it was not without influence.

As long as it operated on the fringes of the veterans' movement the *Croix de Feu* was quite open about its membership. Figures cited in the bulletin of the association are given an air of authenticity by their modesty. The first thirty-four *Croix de Feu* adherents met in Lyon on 8th December, 1929. By 1932 there were 300 of them. On his first visit to Lyon in December 1930, la Rocque, then Vice-president, regarded Lyon as "a veritable example to the association as a whole". But as President-general he changed his view, making known in April 1931 his annoyance that the Rhône section was one of only three in the country in which recruitment was stationary.¹⁹ La Rocque's attempts to stimulate activity do not, however, appear to have brought success until late in 1933. Communiqués from the league began to appear regularly in the conservative press only in that year. Monthly prefectural reports first mention the *Croix de Feu* only three days before the riots of 6th February.²⁰ Table 16 confirms that substantial growth took place only after 6th February.

14 AN F⁷ 13 040, 4-7-1933; AN F⁷ 13 205, 27-2-1928, 20-1-1929.

15 *L'Union française*, November 1929. In December he reported that since 1926 membership had risen from 200 to over 4,000. These figures may be reconciled with the figure given above if they represent respectively Lyon/Rhône and the south east region.

16 *L'Alerte*, 1-5-1930.

17 AN F⁷ 13 235, 24-1-1928, 18-1-1929. This was a far cry from the early days of the league, when rally with Taittinger and Redier had been attended by 2,500.

18 *L'Alerte*, December, 1935. Didier boasted defensively that "nous sommes une poignée de jeunes français" (*L'Alerte*, 24-3-1929). *L'Alerte* admitted that the JP were not as numerous as certain others leagues, but found comfort in a comparison with Jesus Christ and his twelve apostles.

19 *La Relève*, 11-11-1930, December 1930, April 1931, January 1932. At the beginning of the new year he remained critical, remarking that Lyon had enough members only for a second rank provincial town—a fault put down by him to "the Lyonnais mentality, very attached to old ideas".

20 ADR 4M 236, 3-2-1934.

From this point membership figures given by the league become less reliable. A figure of 3,000 was cited in April 1934, while the newly organized *Volontaires Nationaux* (VN), grouping those too young to have served in the trenches, claimed 600 adherents in Lyon and 1,500 in the region in the summer of that year.²¹ A *Croix de Feu* communiqué claimed 15,000 marchers on the Jeanne d'Arc parade of May 1936, while police sources suggested the still impressive figure of 4,000.²² If it is assumed that the lower figure is the correct one, and that the league was able to mobilize two thirds of its members for its the most important date in the calender of then extreme right, then it is possible to guess at a total membership of 6,000 in the Rhône on the eve of dissolution. By 1936 the *Croix de Feu* were already the most significant far right organization hitherto seen in the department.

Geography

The geographical implantation of the three major leagues is shown in Maps 10.1 to 10.4. Royalist sympathisers lived chiefly in the space of the "old bourgeoisie" and aristocracy. In this AF resembled the elites of the Federation. Many resided in the *presqu'île*. Particularly noticeable is a concentration in districts 105, 106 and 107. The strength of Radicalism in the constituency of Edouard Herriot set political life there in an archaic mould, particularly as the right expected little electoral success there. Whereas there are twenty-eight militants in the bourgeois districts of the peninsula, there are a mere seven in those of the 3rd and 6th arrondissements. Royalists are also found in the western suburbs, where many of the wealthy possessed country houses. Another area of royalist strength is 7th arrondissement, accounted for by the presence of the University.²³

Outside of the agglomeration, royalists were numerous in the Beaujolais winegrowing area including the town of Villefranche, an area where nobles were numerous, and where some had town houses in the 2nd arrondissement of Lyon. AF was also well supported in the textile towns of the Monts du Beaujolais another area where traditional values were strong. According to the police the league had in Cours a security service equal in number to that of Lyon, consisting of 60 commissars²⁴ and an important number of vehicles.²⁵

Although the number of JP militants on Map 10.3 is small, a pattern is nevertheless apparent. Like the royalists, JP sympathisers lived in the area around the faculties. JP militants also resembled the AF in their preference for wealthy areas of the

²¹ *Le Nouvelliste*, 8-7-1934.

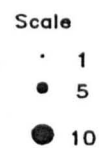
²² *Le Nouvelliste*, 11-5-1936; ADR 1M 172.

²³ The faculties are in districts 702 and 704.

²⁴ A part of the "strong arm" of the league, the adult equivalent of the *Camelots du roi*.

²⁵ AN F⁷ 13 205, 17-11-1928. In Cours the PDP were also very strong, winning the *mairie* in 1935. The main political division in this textile town ran through political Catholicism, opposing royalist integristism and Christian democracy.

Action Francaise
1928 to June 1936



Map 10.1

Action Francaise
1928 to June 1936



Map 10.2

The Jeunesses Patriotes
1928 to June 1936



Map 10.3

The Croix de Feu
1934 to June 1936



Map 10.4

city. The only evidence of JP influence in the countryside is the intermittent existence of a section at Arbresle.

In view of the poor quality of the *Croix de Feu* sample, all that can be said about Map 10.4 is that the majority of *Croix de Feu* also lived in bourgeois areas of the city.²⁶ The map suggests that *Croix de Feu* militants prefer the bourgeois districts of the 2nd arrondissement to those of the left bank. Other evidence suggests, however, although the league had originally drawn its cadres from the traditional areas of the extreme right, with time it expanded into the bourgeois areas of the left bank. In April 1936 the section covering the 3rd and 6th arrondissements was described as the fastest growing in the department.²⁷ Where the old extreme right had drawn support from the areas of the Catholic bourgeoisie and aristocracy, with their history of anti-Republicanism, the *Croix de Feu* recruited more widely. The league did not break into working class areas, but by 1935 it was making progress in rural areas. Whereas the AF was implanted only in those parts of the countryside where the nobility was strong, the *Croix de Feu* had sections all over the department.²⁸

Age

The most striking feature of Graph 25 is the youthfulness of militants of the extreme right in general.²⁹ The average age of AF, JP and *Croix de Feu* militants in 1934 was forty-two, forty-one and forty respectively. Of the parties of the parliamentary right only the PDP has a similar age profile,³⁰ a fact which confirms that Christian democrats and royalists tended to recruit in the same milieu, and which does much to explain the bitterness between the PDP and the extreme right.

The relative youth of *Croix de Feu* militants is all the more remarkable because the sample consists in majority of party leaders. Especially noticeable is the high recruitment of la Rocque's league amongst those in their thirties (48%). Furthermore, 31% of *Croix de Feu* militants were aged thirty-six to thirty-nine in 1934. This age group was that upon which the brunt of fighting during the war had fallen.³¹ Many of those under thirty found their way into the sample because of involvement in violent incidents. Most were probably "Dispos"—members of the paramilitary security service of the league. That the over sixties are fairly numerous reflects the presence of a number of retired senior officers. The military reference was shared by all three generations.

26 No less than 59% of those resident in Lyon and Villeurbanne lived in such areas as defined by Jean-Luc Pinol.

27 *Flambeau du sud-est*, April, 1936.

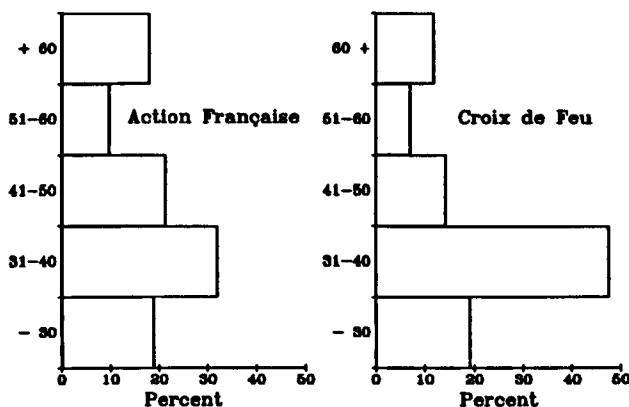
28 That there are a few *Croix de Feu* militants in working class Villeurbanne is due to the presence in the sample of activists noted by the police after incidents in nearby Décines (Isère).

29 Youthfulness would be even more noticeable were the contribution of students to both leagues taken fully into account.

30 The mean age of PDP militants was forty, that of the Alliance forty-seven, and of the Federation forty-nine.

31 Prost, *Les Ancien combattants*, volume two, chapter one. One would have had to have been thirty-five or older in 1934 to have fought in the war.

Graph 25: Age of Militants of the *Croix de Feu* and *Action française*³²

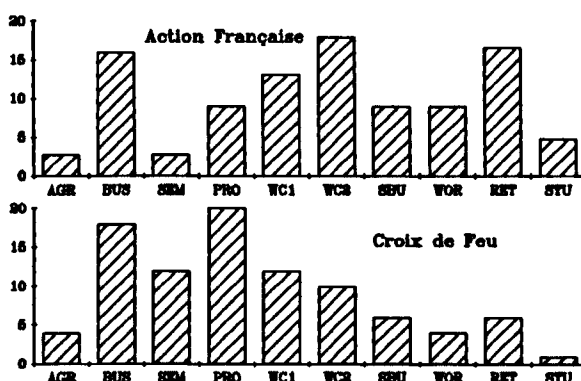


Although royalist militants are also comparatively young in relation to those of the parliamentary right, it is noticeable that AF does better than either the *Croix de Feu* or JP in the older generation. The shape of the graph supports the contention that an older generation of committed royalists served as an organizational base for younger activists many of whom had only a loose commitment to the monarchy.

Social Class

The breakdown by occupation of militants of the *Croix de Feu* and AF is shown in Graph 26, while the social class of twenty-nine JP is shown in Table 17. The largely bourgeois profile of the *Croix de Feu* and JP contrasts

Graph 26: Social class of militants of the leagues in the Rhône



sharply with the more petty bourgeois royalist league. But since the great majority of the *Croix de Feu* sample are drawn from the leadership of the league, its appeal to

³² The royalist sample covers the years from 1928 to June 1936, while the *Croix de Feu* sample covers only 1934 to June 1936.

white collar workers and peasants is certainly underrepresented.³³ There is no evidence of strong support for the *Croix de Feu* in the working class. So although both *Croix de Feu* and AF recruited mainly in wealthy districts, not all of its members were drawn from the elites. This shows the importance of a whole network of social relations.

Domination of the JP by students is confirmed by the pains taken by the league to deny that it consisted of “daddies’ boys” with money in their pockets, mocking the fate of the working classes.³⁴ A more honest writer described the JP as composed not uniquely of youth, but also of veterans, retired officers and businessmen.³⁵ Whatever the real proportions, however, there can be little doubt that the JP was an almost wholly bourgeois movement.

Table 17 Social Class of JP members	
Students	11
Ruling class	8
White collar	5
Workers	2
Farmers	3

The liberal professions are overrepresented in the AF. But the professions were equally well represented in the lay centre right, the PDP and indeed the left, and more so in the *Croix de Feu*. Table 15,³⁶ moreover, confirms that doctors are nowhere near as numerous in the AF as Eugen Weber (mistakenly) estimates them to be.³⁷ Royalist support in the professions was probably declining. The days when the pretender’s representative in the south-east could be elected *bâtonnier* of the order of advocates in Lyon had gone.³⁸ A new generation of Catholic intellectuals was attracted by Christian democracy as much as by royalism.

Two characteristics of royalist businessmen stand out.³⁹ Firstly big firms were well represented.⁴⁰ Bruno Flachère de Roustan, who had succeeded his father as rep-

33 The petty bourgeois nature of those in the sample because of their involvement in street disturbances supports this supposition. For example the three dispos involved in a shooting incident at Villeurbanne in 1935 were all office workers.

34 *Alerte*, October 1934. One writer claimed that most JP members were either workers or white collar workers. But others estimated that between one third and half of members were students. *Nouvelliste*, 21-1-1928, 21-12-1929.

35 *Alerte*, October 1929.

36 See page 242.

37 Weber, op. cit., pp. 266-7. His result is due to a methodological error. Doctors make up 25% of Weber’s sample, which he claims to be “quite random”. Yet he constituted it simply by noting the profession of the 273 out of 873 cadres who gave their professions in the *Almanacs de l’Action Française* of 1933. Doctors always gave their profession in their titles, and so are bound to be overrepresented!

38 Régis Flachère de Roustan had been *bâtonnier* before WW1. He was the uncle of the Comte de Paris’s representative in the 1930s.

39 For this discussion the financiers of the royalist league as listed in a police report of 17-11-1928, (AN F⁷ 13 205) have been drawn upon, though they were not included in the sample.

40 Here too we have to part company with Eugen Weber, (op. cit., p. 263, who states that AF drew support largely from small and medium firms. He cites the blanket makers of Cours as an example. Whilst most Cours firms were

representative of the Duc de Guise in the south-east, was a member of the board of directors of Descours & Cabaud, one of the largest metal trading companies in the world. This firm financed not only AF, but a number of other extremist organizations.⁴¹ Marius Berliet, as a Legitimist, was suspicious of AF. He was nonetheless prepared to finance it.⁴² His nephew Joseph was a member of the league. Secondly, with the exception of the Berliets, royalist businessmen came from relatively conservative sectors of the economy. Employers in the Beaujolais cotton industry were numerous.⁴³ Two of three royalist *fabricant de soieries* were merchant manufacturers in Victor Perret's embroidered silks category.⁴⁴ Luxury industries were also represented by three jewellers. Business supporters of AF resemble those to whom Victor Perret appealed.⁴⁵ Affinity between AF and the right wing of the Federation can also be seen in the appeal of royalism to the aristocratic and bourgeois landowners of the Beaujolais.⁴⁶ The leader of the Beaujolais section of AF was the Comte de Fleurieu of Arnas, perhaps the wealthiest landowner in the department.⁴⁷ *Action française* is more over-represented amongst retired groups than is any other league or party. This reflects the fact that those who were economically active often hid their royalist sympathies.

It is not possible to say much about petty bourgeois support for the AF. It is noticeable that royalism was relatively popular among small shopkeepers, a group which makes up a greater proportion of AF militants than it does of any other conservative movement. There was some justification for royalist efforts to exploit discontent in this group. The AF also drew a significant proportion of its members from private sector white collar workers. Royalist white collar workers, as far as one can tell from a small sample, worked in small and medium family firms.⁴⁸ In both Lyon and Cours they frequently worked in firms owned by royalists. On the other hand, the few workers in the sample were more likely to be found in large firms.

Closer examination of the occupational profile of the *Croix de Feu* shows a league very different to AF. In spite of the smallness of the sample, it is possible to see in the *Croix de Feu* certain features of the PSF.⁴⁹ There is some evidence to confirm K-J. Müller's identification of the *Croix de Feu* with modernizing business.⁵⁰ It

medium sized in terms of workers employed—perhaps 250 on average—this tightly linked group of firms monopolized blanket production in France.

41 A member of the Cabaud family, though not a businessman, was leader of the royalist veterans' group, the *Association Marius Plateau*.

42 Saint-Loup, op. cit., p. 210 "Il [Berliet] a rencontré Charles Maurras un jour à Paris pour exprimer son admiration au légitimiste et à l'écrivain, l'un et l'autre égaré dans ce parti d'Action Française qu'il juge aussi nébuleuse que les autres".

43 For example Emile Brun of Cours, who employed 200 in 1928.

44 Proton de la Chapelle, and Aimé Fichet. The other, Jarosson, was a *usinier*.

45 In this case it is possible to agree with E. Weber, who identifies AF with backward business. (p. 63).

46 The expression "bourgeois oligarchy" is used by R. Locke, op. cit., to describe those bourgeois dynasties who supported the Legitimists in the 1870s.

47 Garrier, op. cit., p. 444. This, at least, had been his status in 1914.

48 Neither of the two royalists employed in banks worked in those where Catholic trades unionism was strong. One worked in the Lyon branch of the Westminster Bank, the other in the Villefranche branch of Crédit Lyonnais.

49 See Chapter eleven.

50 Müller, op. cit., pp. 89 ff.

is significant that there was no genuine representative of the silk industry,⁵¹ but that here were two bosses of medium engineering firms.⁵² The presence too of a number of senior managers and salaried engineers suggests continuities with the progressive bourgeoisie of the late 1920s. But certain qualifications must be made, for *big* businessmen in the modern sector were not attracted to the *Croix de Feu*. Only one big businessman, a lesser member of the Morin-Pons banking family, is known to have backed openly the league. Even he was eliminated in March 1935. The *Croix de Feu* drew most of its business support from family firms particularly in the engineering industry. Such firms had in the late 1920s followed big businessmen like Weitz. But since the onset of the depression hostility to large firms had grown, all the more so as big engineering employers were increasingly united with the elites of the silk industry. In consequence medium firms had good reason to feel unrepresented either by the Chamber of Commerce or established political parties. Big business meanwhile had become somewhat disconnected from party politics—a potentially dangerous development.

All that can be said of *Croix de Feu* support among white collar workers is that it was probably drawn mainly from those resident in central areas of the city, that is from the same areas in which the CFTC recruited. There is more reliable qualitative evidence of the nature of *Croix de Feu* support in rural areas. Here too there is a continuity with social Catholicism. A letter of Abbé Marteau, chaplain of the JAC in the Rhône, to Félix Garcin, reveals a “confusion qui s’établit de plus en plus entre ces groupements [les Croix de Feu] et nos mouvements d’Action catholique”.⁵³ At about the same time the *Nouvelliste* reported “la curiosité de plus et plus grande que les populations rurales montrent à l’égard [des Croix de Feu].”⁵⁴ The *Croix de Feu*, then, appear to have fastened onto the discontent of young conservative peasant proprietors. Given the youth of JAC militants it is unlikely that they were the sole source of peasant support for the *Croix de Feu*. But the JAC were part of a wider movement of self-conscious peasant activism, of which Jean-Marie Parrel was typical.

In sum, the sociology of the *Croix de Feu* suggests a mobilization of rank and file supporters of the parliamentary right, often perhaps touched by social Catholicism, together with sections of the elites which saw themselves as insufficiently well represented by existing institutions and parties. Rarely for a major conservative party in the Rhône, the *Croix de Feu* were not after 1935 led by a businessman. Louis Freynet, was a thirty-seven year old representative for a St. Etienne firm of printers. Certainly businessmen and the bourgeoisie in general were overrepresented among

⁵¹ The nearest was Xavier Ricard, boss of a fine metals firm which amongst other things made gold threads for the silk industry.

⁵² Perron, leader of the fourth sector had a small metal engraving firm in Villeurbanne. The other representative was Guichard, proprietor of a foundry.

⁵³ Michoud to Garcin, 30-3-1936, in Archives of the Union du sud-est, quoted by Gayet, op. cit.

⁵⁴ *Nouvelliste*, 23-4-1936.

Freynet's collaborators. But after the exclusion of Morin-Pons in 1935 no large capitalists were present, though the latter almost certainly continued to finance the league.⁵⁵ Some leaders were on the margins of the elite. One such was Jacques Morel-Journal, who in 1935 led the *Croix de Feu* in the Beaujolais. Brother of the Chamber of Commerce president, but not involved in the family business, Jacques Morel-Journal lived as a bourgeois landowner in a commune near Villefranche. Jacques was reputed to have resented this exclusion.⁵⁶ So when the *Croix de Feu* presented themselves as an expression of "les classes moyennes", their views were shaped as much by the effort to define and legitimate a disparate movement as by sociological reality. The *Croix de Feu* cannot be reduced to a movement of the petty bourgeoisie.⁵⁷

Soirées mondaines, Parish circles and veterans

All three leagues under consideration had in common a hierarchical and disciplined organization, designed to prepare members for action on the streets. But in other respects the modes of encadrement of the leagues differed substantially. Whilst *Action française* struggled to find a new mode of insertion into social and political life after Papal condemnation, the JP profited from the discomfiture of the royalists to establish itself in the Catholic network. The *Croix de Feu*, on the other hand, broke with traditional methods of organization. It developed the military principle to a greater extent than any other league, and used veteran organizations to create a quasi-secular movement based on family and *quartier*.

Action Française

The return to power of the right in 1926 was not the only reason for the terminal decline of the AF which began in the late 1920s. Papal condemnation of the league was a serious blow. Cardinal Maurin had reputedly been sympathetic to *Action Française*. He was rumoured to have refused a request from Rome to initiate the process of condemnation of the league.⁵⁸ In the following years, however, Maurin did his duty, frequently reminding the faithful that involvement in *Action Française* was forbidden. On one occasion he was taken to task in the royalist press for a pastoral letter preaching submission to the established regime. Colonel de la Corne asked whether this principle could be generalized to include Russia or the Vendée.⁵⁹

55 The new délégué régionale for the south east, Rouillon, was presented by the left as a representative of big business. In reality he was salaried manager of a chain of shops, the *Casino de Saint Etienne*—a firm, incidentally, with numerous connections to the far right.

56 *Journal d'Henry Morel-Journal*, 21-11-1929 and ?

57 This is to dispute the argument of P. Machêfer, "Les Croix de Feu", *passim*.

58 During the furore provoked by Papal sanctions he adopted an attitude of benevolent neutrality towards the Maurrassians, earning an indirect rebuke in *Osservatore Romano* A. Dansette, in *Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine*, II. *Sous la III^e république*, Paris, 1952, describes Maurin as an intransigent and an integrist. See also Paul, *op. cit.*, pp. 151, 160. Henry Morel-Journal reports in his diary that Maurin craftily refused to say whether *Action française* could be sold outside churches. (*Journal*, 27-12-1926).

59 ASR ?, *La République lyonnaise*, 10-3-1928.

In 1928 Admiral Schwerrer encouraged Lyonnais royalists to resist.⁶⁰ In the same year Lyonnais royalists created the *Association Saint-Louis*, an offshoot of the *Dames royalistes*. Its ostensible purpose was to pray for France. But, said the police, the real aim was to penetrate milieux closed since the condemnation.⁶¹ Certainly in the 1930s royalists still retained influence among the senior Catholic laity through families such as the Lucien-Bruns and the Jaquiers. Henry de Moinecourt's rôle as a journalist on *La République lyonnaise* did not prevent him from occupying a leading position in the *Oeuvre des cercles*. But such people had to be discreet, so it is doubtful whether the efforts of the *Cercle Saint Louis* were successful.

The practical effects of condemnation were considerable. The *Nouvelliste* ceased to print AF communiqués.⁶² In the summer of 1926 many of the clergy had been willing to speak up for *Action française*,⁶³ Yet in the 1930s hardly any were willing to do so. Condemnation of AF also cleared the way for Republicans to establish themselves in parish *cercles*. *La République lyonnaise* reported that one of their commissars had been expelled from the St. Bruno parish circle—that of Victor Perret—because he had requested that a chaplain speak on the subject of Papal infallibility.⁶⁴

Action française nonetheless survived. It did so partly by developing into a kind of elite counter-society, a tendency present in Lyonnais royalism since the 1870s. It goes without saying that royalists were closely linked by family ties. One example is the Berliet family, where kinship was cemented by fidelity to the pre-Concordat Petite église. Another example is Henri Brac de la Perrière, one of two family members in the *Camelots du Roi* in 1928, who was married to a Jarroson, a family which also included royalist sympathisers.⁶⁵

AF took on some of the features of a salon. Many of its meetings were politicized *soirées mondaines*. A reception for Princess Geneviève in Villefranche included a conference with slides given by the Comte de Colbert on the history of the royal family--conferences were the staple fare of the best society in the Rhône. Meetings of the *Jeunes filles royalistes* frequently ended with dancing. Needless to say the more turbulent elements of AF, such as Pierre Mondon, lathe operator and "réputé

60 AN F⁷ 13 205, 16-4-1928: "si l'on me refuse les derniers sacrements, et bien tant pis, je suis sur que le Dieu juste m'accueillera, car il ne peut pas couvrir les erreurs humaines de son représentant terrestre".

61 AN F⁷ 13 205, 17-11-1928.

62 It is unlikely that this was, as some royalists alleged, because the *Nouvelliste* too was fearful of papal condemnation.

63 *Journal d'Henry Morel-Journal*, 27-12-1926: "en somme, à voir l'attitude de beaucoup de royalistes et même des prêtres, on voit combien le péril auquel le Pape a voulu couper court était grave".

64 *La République lyonnaise*, 25-6-1927, attributed the incident to infiltration by members of Marc Sangnier's *Jeune république*, the arch-enemies of the royalists. It is more likely that Catholics in general were offended by this slight on the integrity of the Pope.

65 Many AF businessmen in particular were related: for example two members of the Valette family, of the Tanneries Vallette & Faugier.

66 AN F⁷ 13 205, 4-12-1928. A reception at the Salons Berrier et Millet, Place Bellecour, in honour of a relative of the Duc de Guise, followed a similar pattern (6-12-1928).

très violent" were not invited.⁶⁷ It is possible that AF took over the role that the secretive *Cercle de Lyon*, defunct since the war, had once played in elite sociability.⁶⁸

Another important aspect of elite royalism was its penetration of artistic and cultural life in Lyon. *La République Lyonnaise* doubled as a literary and theatrical review. In a city where bourgeois liberalism had traditionally been associated with philistinism, this was an important means for royalists to maintain their specificity. This lends significance to Calixte's dismissal of a young noble as a pretentious youth who occupied himself in founding artistic reviews which never survived more than two seasons.⁶⁹ Royalists also included a number of amateur historians, who busied themselves with the elaboration of an anti-republican tradition for the city.⁷⁰ In 1940 the Vichy government appointed a royalist to the city council as delegate for the arts.

Except in the Beaujolais, where they remained a sizeable and cohesive social group, royalist elites rarely took part in open AF activity. The Pretender tended to act as an alternative focus of political loyalty for salon society. Flachère de Roustan, hist delegate, was seen only intermittently at AF meetings, and was not a member of the regional committee of the league. Even in the Beaujolais male nobles were discreet in their support for AF. The police said of one reception, "il est à noter que les éléments ruraux, hobereaux et propriétaires du Beaujolais, était plus nombreux que ceux de la ville. D'autre part l'élément féminin dominait largement".⁷¹ In Lyon the only meetings where aristocrats were regularly seen were those of the *Dames royalistes* and the *Jeunes filles royalistes*.⁷² Royalist families, whether aristocratic or bourgeois, were willing to allow their names to appear in subscription lists published in *La République lyonnaise*, to permit their sons to join the *Camelots*, and their wives to attend AF receptions. But heads of families, with businesses and farms to run, either did not advertise their royalism, or they supported the Federation. Such attitudes help to explain the transformation of the USE into a pressure group operating within the Republican system. They also explain why there was an arms-length relationship between royalist elites and popular royalism.

Excluded from the parishes and faced with JP competition for the allegiance of students, the most important remaining source of influence over the masses was through the limited means of patronage in the hands of royalist elites. Perhaps this is why the some of the tradesmen who supported the royalists sold luxuries—from cars to jewellery. More important were the employment opportunities in the hands of business sympathisers. *Commissaires* and *Camelots* were placed in firms where they were guaranteed free medical treatment, one months' wages in case of sacking, and

67 ADR 4m 637 (Associations), 13-10-1932 (report on Mondon).

68 On the *Cercle de Lyon* see Pinol *Mobilités et immobilismes*, pp. 228-9.

69 Dufourt, op. cit., p. 125.

70 K. Passmore, "La droite, une contre-mobilization", in *La mémoire édifiante* forthcoming.

71 AN F⁷ 13 205, 4-12-1928. Out of seventy persons present, only twenty were men.

72 AN F⁷ 13 205, 4-12-1928.

permission to leave work whenever called upon by AF. Firms listed by the police as employing a group of leaguers, included Berliet, Descours & Cabaud, and a number of smaller firms.⁷³

Royalist elites were also content to allow the leadership of AF to rest with a group of “political brokers”, a group which had connections to the elite but were at one remove from it.⁷⁴ The leading royalist personality in the south east was Louis Jasseron. Aged forty-two in 1934 Jasseron was from a family of *soyeux*, whose firm made high quality embroidered silks. Jasseron stands somewhere between notability and professional politics. He gave his profession as journalist in the employ of *La République Lyonnaise*, whilst his position as regional secretary of *Action française* was included in his entry in the exclusive *Tout-Lyon* annuaire. *La République Lyonnaise* acted as liaison between royalist elites and politicians.

One step further from the elites, but bourgeois for all that, were the leaders of the *Commissaires*, *Camelots*, and local sections. Emile Brun, thirty six years of age, had inherited a large blanket factory in Cours from his father. He joined AF in 1921, and was made president of the Roannais federation in 1928. Until his exclusion for embezzlement in 1932 Brun was perhaps the most active member of the league, participating in several escapades.⁷⁵ Another such militant was Jean Goirand, owner of a medium sized paper wholesalers. Like Brun he was characterized by the police as “très violent”.⁷⁶

To this group fell the task of organizing, in theory at least, for the violent overthrow of the Republic. At a meeting in 1926 a representative of the national leadership re-emphasized that AF would not flinch from direct action, for the Republic still had many defenders who would not give up without a fight.⁷⁷ If the police are to be believed, *Camelots* and *Commissaires* were divided into squads, each of which contributed a number of “gens surs” to a squad armed with coshes and revolvers. These shock troops were, the police said, “audacious, dangerous, and familiar with the use of firearms”. On Sunday afternoons militants engaged in firing practice on the estate of a friendly landowner at Dardilly. Police reports on the members of these squads are evocative: Jean Vallette, son of businessman, was marked out by his great size. He had achieved notoriety by unscrewing the name plate from Herriot’s door and displaying it at a *Camelot* dinner.⁷⁸

73 F⁷ 13 205, 17-11-1928. Smaller firms include Imprimerie Rey, La Providence Assurances, and the Marchand de soies, Delval. Our own sample confirms that At the Tubize artificial fibres factory in Vénissieux the caretaker in the part of the company housing estate reserved for supervisory personnel was a Federation member. A number of AF commissars also lived there.

74 The other two were Gregnot, an insurance broker from the 1st arrondissement; and a thirty seven year old publicist, Paul Garcin who in 1928 stood as a “candidat sportif” in the general election.

75 His police file describes him as “un grand chef de l’AF”: “très violent, Brun paye de sa personne et de ses deniers”.

76 AN F⁷ 13 205, 17-11-1928.

77 AN F⁷ 13 200, 11-3-1926. As the police euphemistically put it Emile Brun, was “considéré très suspecte contre le régime actuel” (AN F⁷ 13 205, 13-10-1928).

78 AN F⁷ 13 205, 17-11-1928.

Not all of the activities of AF militants were harmless pranks. On several occasions, as we shall see, they were involved in violent incidents, often involving firearms. All the same, in the early 1930s the activist wing of AF was not solidly organized. This was more than a simple conjunctural problem, for the lower echelons of the league also felt the effects of Papal condemnation. Exclusion from parish *cercles* has already been mentioned. From 1927 royalists complained of difficulties in organizing Catholic university students, who were turning more and more to the "republican" JP.⁷⁹ Students furnished a considerable proportion of *Camelots*, so it is not surprising that by March 1929 the royalists were unable to find people who were willing to sell *L'Action Française* in front of the offices of *Le Progrès*.⁸⁰ AF never recovered from this crisis. Local sections displayed no real vigour, in spite of several reorganizations. In October 1932 AF created the *Cercle Cyrano* in the hope of winning back the interest of members who were less and less ready to frequent the league's headquarters. The *cercle* provided beers, hot drinks, food and games.⁸¹

The *Cercle Cyrano* did not revitalize the league. What is most interesting is that only when faced with collapse did AF organize such a centre, and then only in imitation of the *Croix de Feu*. This underlines firstly the extent to which AF had been dependent upon the Catholic network to bind it together, and secondly on the organizational resources of aristocratic and bourgeois elites. The latter appear to have been ambivalent in their attitude towards militant politics, and desirous that it not get out of control.⁸²

On the other hand, the activist wing did have some autonomy. AF could therefore function as a haven for those of an extremist temperament in periods when such ideas were not widely favoured. When circumstances improved these activists, whose commitment to monarchy was not deep, were available to form the cadres of new organizations. This had happened in the mid-1920s with the *Faisceau*, and would happen again in the mid-1930s. After the dissolution of the league in 1936 the movement split into its component parts. On the one hand elites re-organized in the *Groupe Lugdunum*, which moved ever closer to the Federation. On the other hand, rank and file militants flooded into the *Croix de Feu* and above all the PPF.

The Jeunesses patriotes

Unlike royalism the JP emerged as a reaction to crisis, appearing in the Rhône in 1925. Yet the new league also profited from the crisis of royalism. Close analysis reveals a small but complex organization, combining features of the royalist tradition, fascism and a modern constitutional conservative party.

79 AN F⁷ 13 205, 27-12-1928.

80 AN F⁷ 13 200, 15-3-29.

81 ADR 4m 637 (associations), 13-10-1932, 5-3-1936; AN F⁷ 13 205, 18-10-1932.

82 Colonel de la Come was a representative of the cautious elitist wing, and was opposed to the methods of Emile Brun.

The JP made no secret of its Catholicism.⁸³ It appears to have taken on the place of royalists in the parish network. Many JP were adherents of the *Cercle des étudiants catholiques* in the 7th arrondissement, which provided lodgings for some activists.⁸⁴ There was no shortage of priests willing to preside the annual mass in remembrance of the JP dead. In the early 1930s Louis Marchal led both the JP's own veterans' organization and that of the Church.⁸⁵ Through such links the JP contributed to the mobilization of Catholic youth for the Federation.⁸⁶

The JP also inherited from the AF a predilection for paramilitarism. In 1930 the police reported an elaborate system for letting JP members know whether they should bring revolvers or merely coshes to meetings.⁸⁷ Some of this, no doubt was posturing: adherents were melodramatically urged to be ready at all times to disguise the numbers on their berets. In 1930, moreover, there were several complaints from Paris of the "lack of method and organization" of the Lyonnais JP. One reason perhaps was that the JP disagreed on the purpose of their paramilitary wing. Henri de Kérillis came to Lyon on several occasions to urge upon the JP the view that their real duty was to win over "les imbéciles qui, sans opinion, ne savent de quel côté voter". He preferred to harness the energy of the JP to electioneering on behalf of the parliamentary right.⁸⁸ But even the supporters of Kérillis agreed that the JP constituted an indispensable reserve of armed force.

The JP stood in a changing and ambiguous relationship to the establishment. The league was financed by big business. The name of Gillet is mentioned in police reports.⁸⁹ Certainly the JP did not have the membership needed to finance its own journal. Independence might as a result have been compromised: reports that withdrawal of support from the *Nouvelliste* had torpedoed *L'Alerte* in 1931 might well be correct. But Victor Perret's equivocal attitude to the JP suggests that it did have a degree of autonomy. This derived partly from a recognition in some sections of the establishment of the limitations of notable politics, and partly from the complex and often contradictory relationship of the Catholic network to conservative politics.

The Croix de Feu

Until the mid-1930s any movement of the right desirous of mobilizing a popular constituency was dependent upon the Church. In this respect the *Croix de Feu* repre-

83 *Union Française*, 7-4-1929. Auguste Allaix wrote that it was perfectly reasonable that Catholicism should provide the mystique of a political movement, and denied that the Church was an accomplice of capitalism.

84 AN F⁷ 13 234, 14-5-1927. Three of the students plotted on map 10.3 gave were lodged by the cercle's Maison des étudiants catholiques, directed by abbé Rouillet, at 4 rue Montesquieu (bureaux 704). It was reprinted in *L'Alerte* in August 1936 that the JP had once mobilized the youth of the *Cercle catholique* on behalf of Laurent Bonnevay.

85 *Les Droits de religieuses anciens combattants* (DRAC).

86 See Chapter 5.

87 AN F⁷ 13 235, 8-4-1930, 2-5-1930. The JP's "groupe mobile" had apparently also been organizing a truncheon for each member.

88 AN F⁷ 13 235, 24-6-1930.

89 AN F⁷ 13 235, 11-1-1930; One former activist told me that Taittinger himself financed the Lyon section out of his own pocket. Interview with Monsieur Guy Jarroson, former President of the Lyon section.

sented a new departure, for the league did not draw upon the organizational resources of the parishes, and was viewed unfavourably by the hierarchy. Colonel Morin-Pons, a leader of the VN, was a Protestant. Each year on the 11th November the *Croix de Feu* held services in Catholic and Protestant churches, and even in a synagogue. It is probable too that the league won over some employers in the engineering industry, a group which had previously adhered either to the Radicals or the lay centre right. The rise of the Popular Front had given added urgency to the old question of how to overcome the clerical/anti-clerical divide. Yet closer analysis reveals once again that mere consciousness of the problem was insufficient.

The Catholic reference was not so easily conjured away. Given that most members were undoubtedly practicing Catholics, the *Croix de Feu* could not have rejected Catholicism. Indeed, Cardinal Maurin himself once attended the league's annual mass. Until 1934 a number of clerics were members of the league.⁹⁰ There is no mistaking the league's debt to aspects of Catholic thought. In so far as the league did achieve its goal of transcendence it was through submission to a strong leader in a militarized party. It is this which made possible the attraction of engineering employers to the *Croix de Feu*, rather than a genuine ideological rapprochement.

Above all the *Croix de Feu* owed a debt to social Catholicism. The attractiveness of the movement to the adherents of the JAC has already been mentioned. Abbé Marteau spoke of links between the *Croix de Feu* and Catholic Action in *general*, mentioning the ACJF in particular. He drew attention to "la situation qu'occupent dans nos oeuvres certains propagandistes [des Croix de Feu] ou du patronage qu'ils leur accordent" and to "la propagande indiscrete faite par ces groupements aupres de nos militants et dirigeants".⁹¹ The precise details of such links are a matter for further research. Suffice it to note that a former President of USIC, Marcel Canat de Chizy, was a leading activist in the *Croix de Feu*,⁹² and that there was a supporter of the league on the administrative council of the *Chronique*.⁹³

Two things explain the connection between social Catholicism and the *Croix de Feu*, and also the ambiguity of that connection. The first is the readiness of many social Catholic militants to collaborate with non-Catholic organizations in order to demonstrate the relevance of Christian solutions to practical social and political problems, and ultimately therefore to attain the goal of re-Christianization.⁹⁴ The second is the way in which pressure group politics in interwar years had become intertwined with the religious division. Much of the impetus behind the rise of the *Croix de Feu* came from the discontent of conservative white collar workers and peasants,

90 Including the chaplain of the garrison of Lyon.

91 Gayet, *op. cit.*, p. 73-4.

92 I interviewed a former *Croix de Feu* activist, Jacques Darodes, who had been raised in the milieu of the *Chronique*.

93 Henri Franchet, professor and former ALP activist.

94 See Chapters 3 and 4.

whose grievances had been articulated by social Catholic movements with their corporatist view of the world. For these two reasons apparently economic demands were in practice inseparable from Catholicism.

Nevertheless, there was bound to be friction with the hierarchy. Abbé Marteau saw the goals of the *Croix de Feu* as antipathetic to those of Catholic Action. He feared that the elites of Catholic Action would be lost in the ideologically eclectic *Croix de Feu*. The result would be another step towards de-Christianization.⁹⁵ Furthermore, the Church feared the rivalry of the *Croix de Feu* in the social field. This too emerges from Marteau's letter to Garcin,⁹⁶ and was later acknowledged in private by the PSF.⁹⁷ The *Croix de Feu* threatened the charitable activities of the Church, while its social centres rivalled the parish *cercles*, and implicitly therefore also posed a threat to the Federation. AF, although just as unreliable on theological grounds, had not posed this sort of challenge, and so had been more easily tolerated.

The *Croix de Feu* was able to rival the Church because of its debt to the veterans' movement, especially the conservative UNC. Yet even here the Catholic reference could not easily be expunged, for these interest groups too had been formed within Church and lay networks. In the Rhône the two main veteran associations, UMAC and the UNC, can be considered respectively as on the one hand centrist and lay and on the other as conservative and Catholic. The distinction was by no means straightforward. UMAC's leader, Mercier was a supporter of Victor Perret and therefore further to the right than UNC President Humbert Isaac.⁹⁸ Isaac represented a moderate tendency within the UNC, was opposed to the pro-league wing of Jean Goy, and saw the *Croix de Feu* as anti-Republican.⁹⁹

As Antoine Prost argues, the mass of adherents of veterans' associations was reluctant to follow those who attempted to use the movement for their own ends.¹⁰⁰ All the same, they were essential to the growth of the *Croix de Feu*. Isaac refused the patronage of the UNC to one of his colleagues in the bureau of the Rhône UNC who had set up a *Croix de Feu* organization in the Ardèche.¹⁰¹ But he was powerless to

95 Gayet, op. cit., pp. 73-4.

96 "Bien plus, le mouvement «Croix de Feu», ne va-t-il pas à l'encontre du but poursuivi? Mis en face de deux groupements dont l'un leur demande un effort: effort de pensée, effort de redressement personnel, effort de rayonnement et de service total de la paroisse, la commune et la profession et un autre qui ne leur demande qu'une adhésion et la participation à quelques manifestations massives, le choix, pour la plupart sera vite fait".

97 AN 451 AP 172. For example, in 1939 a PSF activist in Lyon asked Paris whether the clergy were normally as hostile to such competition as they were in Lyon. (Bruyas to Madame de Préval, 4-2-1939). G. Howlett, op. cit., p. 218 confirms this point.

98 Mercier was a member of the *Alliance démocratique* and a municipal councillor in the 2nd arrondissement. Prost says of Isaac: "d'une intégrité hors suspicion, [...] son passé personnel comme sa tradition familiale font de lui un républicain sincère".

99 In an article in the veteran press in October 1935 he asked to what kind of dictatorship la Rocque was leading his men, and expressed the fear that *Croix de Feu* methods would harden the left-right division and lead ultimately to civil war. Prost, *Les Ancien combattants*, vol 1, pp. 170-1. More than once Isaac was criticised for his Briandism by the *Croix de Feu* of the Rhône.

100 Prost, *Les anciens combattants*, vol 1, concludes "plus que les acteurs de l'histoire, les anciens combattants semblent en être le témoins" (p. 193). R. Soucy, "France: Veteran Politics Between the Wars", in S. Ward (ed.), *The War Generation: Veterans of the World War*, New York, 1975, pp. 59-99 comes to a similar conclusion.

101 Prost, op. cit., p. 165, letter of 9-6-1934.

prevent such contacts from taking place. At the time of its founding the *Croix de Feu* in the Rhône had been an integral part of the veteran movement. As such it enjoyed the official patronage of Army and Church, both of which sent representatives to *Croix de Feu* functions until late 1933. The main *Croix de Feu* activity was to participate in the events of the *ancien combattant* calendar.¹⁰² Delegations were sent to commemorative masses held by various associations, with the express intention of winning adherents.¹⁰³ Members were urged to pay special attention to the small world of regimental associations, “ou tout le monde se connait et ou les parasites de la Gloire ne peuvent que difficilement agir pour leurs petits «combines personnelles»”.¹⁰⁴ Examples of this type could be multiplied: in the Monts du Lyonnais one *Croix de Feu* group was constituted by the President and Vice-president of the communal veterans’ group.¹⁰⁵ Until the spring of 1935 the *Croix de Feu* in the Rhône were led by Louis Marchal, boss of a medium sized wood-working firm. A much-decorated war veteran, aged 58 in 1934, Marchal was well-known as an activist of the far right, having been local President of Antoin Redier’s Légion in the early 1920s. He was also leader of the DRAC, and organization which lobbied for the interests of mobilized clergy.¹⁰⁶ Marchal symbolizes the interpenetration of religion and pressure group politics between the wars.

In spite of its connections to the Church, the veterans movement was essential to the realignment of the right.¹⁰⁷ Old soldiers’ groups had an enormous membership--nearly 30,000 in the Rhône in 1935. As such, although the UNC was Catholic, it was a rival to the Church. This was bound to have implications for a right which in both town and country relied upon the Church for its links with the masses. *Croix de Feu* organization was similar to that of the veterans’ associations, in that bars and games rooms were installed in its sector headquarters.¹⁰⁹ Certain of the ideas of the veterans’ movement from the unity of the trenches to the notion of a moral elite formed by war could be taken over by the *Croix de Feu*, without, however, losing their respectability.

The veterans’ movement also contributed to the militarization of the *Croix de Feu*. The league was organized hierarchically from la Rocque himself at the summit

102 *La Relève*, November, 1930: On 11th November 1930, for example, the league marched between the *Gueules cassés* and the *trépanés de guerre*.

103 *La Relève*, January 1931: “Votre participation encore modeste et rudimentaire aux cérémonies publiques, comme vos délégations aux messes anniversaires et cérémonies auxquelles nous invitent d’autres associations nous ont déjà valu bon nombre d’adhésions.

104 *La Relève*, November, 1930.

105 *Nouvelliste*, 3-11-1934: the commune concerned was St. Martin en Haut. A “sortie” of the Lyon *Croix de Feu* to Neuville in 1934 was welcomed by the *Amicale des ancien combattants* of that commune (*Nouvelliste*, 9-7-1933).

106 On the *Légion*, see Soucy, *French Fascism*, chapter two.

107 This is to modify the argument of Antoine Prost, (*Les Anciens combattants*, vol 2, pp. 182-204), who argues that in rural areas the *ancien combattant* associations were simply the latest form of an ancient type of sociability which can be traced back to the *confréries* described by Maurice Agulhon. Their function was “the slow reproduction of what already existed”.

108 Prost, *Les Anciens combattants*, vol 2, pp. 63-4.

109 ADR 4m 637, 5-3-1936.

down to “hands” of a few men at the base of the movement. Local leaders, often retired officers, were appointed rather than elected. In September 1933 the Rhône *Croix de Feu* voted a motion promising to follow la Rocque “to the end”.¹¹⁰ A year later the police reported that regional leaders had sworn to obey “sans comprendre et sans discussion aux ordres de Paris”.¹¹¹

The militarization of the *Croix de Feu* will be dealt with more fully at a later stage. For the moment it is sufficient to note that the discipline of the *Croix de Feu* gave it a greater degree of independence from social and political elites than that possessed by other conservative movements. Hierarchy, discipline and the symbolism of the trenches also helped the league to present itself as above the religious issue. But few non-Catholics were convinced by this claim.

The Politics of the extreme right

To understand fully the nature of the extreme right in the early 1930s it is useful to divide the period into three. The first stretches from the return of the right to power under Raymond Poincaré in 1926 to the Cartellist victory in the general elections of May and June 1932. The second lasts until the fascist riots of 6 February 1934. The Third culminates in the elections of April and May 1936.

From Poincaré to the Cartel des gauches

In the first period prosperity, relative political stability under a conservative government and the decline of communism ensured the marginality of the far right. Its appeal did not extend much beyond a hard core of militants, students in particular. One index of the weakness of the extreme right is the near absence of confrontation on the streets. In May 1927 about 40 JP students armed with canes and tear gas had disrupted the performance of a play of which they disapproved at the Théâtre de Lyon.¹¹² A more serious incident occurred in October 1928, when *Action française* militants invaded a sitting of the municipal council.¹¹³ Led by Emile Brun, a number of Camelots penetrated into the Chamber; fights broke out between them and some councillors before the police were able to intervene.¹¹⁴ Apart from a series of incidents between paper sellers outside the offices of *Le Progrès* in early 1930,¹¹⁵ and

¹¹⁰ *Nouvelliste*, 22-9-1933.

¹¹¹ AN F⁷ 13 028, 27-10-1934.

¹¹² AN F⁷ 13 234, 12-5-1927. *Nouveau Journal*, 6-5-1927.

¹¹³ The purpose was revenge for the death of a royalist at the unveiling of a statue of Emile Combes at Pons.

¹¹⁴ AN F⁷ 13 205, 4-12-1928, 31-10-28. That evening about 100 royalists demonstrated in front of *Le Progrès*, but were soon dispersed by the police. Brun and two other *Commissaires*, now the heroes of *Action française*, received short suspended sentences for their actions.

¹¹⁵ *Nouvelliste*, 17-2-1930, 25-2-1930. The *Nouvelliste* spoke of weekly exchanges on this spot which did not fail to draw an interested crowd. The most important was the *bagarre* of February 1930, in the course of which a JP student was knifed.

from a clash between communists and *Camelots* in Vaise,¹¹⁶ this was the last disturbance of any importance before 1934.

Nonetheless, the extreme right did manage to survive. The leagues were kept alive by the crisis precipitated by the reforms of the Tardieu period. Elsewhere in France this had contributed to the mobilization of *Défense paysan* and the *Ligue des contribuables*. In the Rhône the crisis led to the rise of Victor Perret. On the one hand there was an alliance of the centre right with the moderate wing of the JP. The link was provided by the *Républicains nationaux* of Henri de Kérillis. On the other there was an implicit alliance of *Action française* and the JP right with the Victor Perret.

But before examining these alliances mention must be made of the *Croix de Feu*. Until 1934 this movement played a secondary role in Lyonnais politics. Nationally la Rocque's league backed the domestic but not the foreign policies of the reformist conservative governments of 1928 to 1932. It was perhaps subsidised by Tardieu. At this time the league could be seen as promoting an authoritarian version of Tardieu's conservative reformism. Hence Ernest Mercier's flirtation with the movement.¹¹⁷ In Lyon, however, the *Croix de Feu* adhered to a more independent line. Glimpses of the future can be seen in the promise that as genuine front line soldiers, the *Croix de Feu* would regenerate first a veterans' movement corrupted by preoccupation with pensions, and then France as a whole.¹¹⁸ But the *Croix de Feu* were almost wholly preoccupied with opposition to Briand. There were virtually no explicit pronouncements on domestic policy from the Rhône *Croix de Feu* before 1932.

The best supporters of Tardieu in the Rhône were the JP. Taittinger, the movement's leader, drawing the lessons of the moment, ceased to call for the overthrow of the Republic and set his followers the more modest task of acting as an honest broker in the affairs of the parliamentary right. To this end he began to co-operate with the *Républicains nationaux* of Henri de Kérillis.¹¹⁹ Kérillis himself travelled to Lyon on several occasions in order to urge the JP to devote themselves to the inculcation of a few simple ideas into the minds of undecided voters, and to reject violence except in the event of a communist coup. Kérillis therefore declared himself against acceptance of an offer of financial aid from the fascist millionaire François Coty.¹²⁰ Kérillis's strategy was accepted by the Regional Secretary of the JP, Auguste Allaix, and above all by his assistant Marcel Didier.¹²¹ In January 1928 the JP set up a poster

116 F⁷ 13 205, 10-6-1931. This incident began when a royalist meeting in a café was disturbed by the noise of communists in an adjacent room. Over the next three evenings there were a series of confrontations.

117 G. Howlett, "La Rocque, the *Croix de Feu*, and the Parti Social Français", D. Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1986. K-J. Muller, "French Fascism and Modernization", JCH, 9, 1976, pp. 75-107.

118 *La Relève*, June 1931. One sympathiser, the writer Claude le Marguet, spoke of a government led by "les mauvais bergers, des ennemis sournois, des métèques complice et puissant".

119 For the history of the JP on the national level in this period see Soucy, *French Fascism*, chapter 8.

120 AN F⁷ 13 235, 24-1-1928, 18-1-1929.

121 *Union française*, January 1929: "La violence, les cris, le chahut, la trique, que l'on emploie contre les pillards, des bandits ou des vandales, ne sont pas des moyens de persuasion. Il faut que nous mettons bien cela dans la tête".

committee and declared themselves ready to follow Kérillis's orders.¹²² JP leaders accepted the whole social and political programme of Tardieu, but viewed Briand's foreign policy less favourably.¹²³

It is hardly surprising that this shift from extreme to centre right was not universally accepted. The radical wing of the JP was led by a twenty-seven year old political adventurer and advertizing agent, Etienne de Raulin de Guetteville de Réal de Camp. A former member of *Action française* in Brittany, de Raulin was notorious for having faked an armed attack on himself. In Lyon he advocated collaboration with the AF and preparation for combat in the street.¹²⁴ Kérillis's techniques, De Raulin said, were better suited to launching a new brand of chocolate than the election of a candidate. They would result in the sacrifice of French independence to electoral committees and ultimately to the powers which financed them.¹²⁵ There was also a more petty bourgeois tone to his discourse, for in the municipal elections of the spring of 1929 De Raulin agitated for an alliance between the right and the committees of Victor Augagneur, the ex-socialist mayor of Lyon, now engaged in a demagogic campaign to unseat Herriot.¹²⁶ De Raulin, then, represents the fascist side of the JP: anti-communist, anti-capitalist, hostile to the political establishment, anti-democratic and ready to resort to violence.¹²⁷ If France were to become truly national then it must be governed by a trained élite, leaving everyone else simply to get on with work and family life.¹²⁸

De Raulin resigned as propaganda secretary of the JP in late 1928, but he continued to edit the party journal, *Union française*, which was his personal property. The definitive break came during the *municipales* of the spring of 1929. At a Radical rally for the municipal elections De Raulin shouted "A Berlin!" as soon as Edouard Herriot began to speak. The incident ended with De Raulin being physically prevented from getting onto the platform. On the following day de Raulin was arrested on a warrant issued by the Bordeaux police for fraud. His rivals in the JP profited from his discomfiture to expel his friends from the league.¹²⁹ De Raulin, out of gaol, formed a new group around *Union française*, taking a few JP with him to form a "Syndical Action Committee".

Yet this did not end dissent in the JP. It is probable that most were suspicious of Didier's moderate line, and were not ready to see the JP become an adjunct of the

¹²² *Nouvelliste*, 23-2-1928.

¹²³ AN F⁷ 13 235, 24-6-1930. Taittinger at Lyon in June 1930 that construction of fortifications was a waste of money.

¹²⁴ *Union française*, 7-4-1929.

¹²⁵ *Union française*, July, 1930.

¹²⁶ *Union française*, 26-5-1929. The aim, of course, was to win over the electorate of the Radicals. The Augagneuristes found de Raulin's support rather compromising.

¹²⁷ *Union française*, January/February 1930. Whilst de Raulin was prepared to participate in elections, he would have preferred to see "notre France gouverné par un pouvoir indépendant des résultats électoraux."

¹²⁸ *Union française*, September 1928.

¹²⁹ AN F⁷ 13 235, 19-4-1929, *Union française*, 5-5-1929.

parliamentary right.¹³⁰ In October 1929 the JP voted a motion obliquely criticizing Taittinger's support for the Briand government. De Raulin meanwhile kept up his agitation for a united front of all nationalist groups, organizing a joint meeting between of JP and AF in December.¹³¹ Such an alliance appeared close to realization in February 1930 when a number of JP came to the aid of a group of *Camelots* who were under attack from the communists.¹³² The incident appears to have revived the extremist wing of the JP, for in a meeting to discuss a response, a Phalange leader urged reprisals, using firearms if necessary.¹³³ Preparations for the organization of an armed "groupe de fer" were got underway. The result was Didier's resignation from the presidency of the Lyon section in November 1930. Soon after he became Director of the Propaganda Centre of the *Républicains nationaux*.¹³⁴

By this time, however, the JP had been marginalized.¹³⁵ The league had great difficulty in replacing Didier. Its newspaper disappeared in December. In January the *Phalange universitaire* had to be dissolved. The decline of the JP into sectionalism was paralleled by a split in de Raulin's group at the end of 1931. A disparate group of Maurrassians like Dr Millet and young fascists like Fernand Sape, left to found a new monthly, *La Patrie lyonnaise*.

The AF too had its problems, but since the league was less of a reaction to crisis it was less sensitive to conjunctural problems. Neither did the royalists suffer the damaging faction fighting of the JP. There were conflicts between the more moderate Colonel de Corne and Emile Brun.¹³⁶ But this did not have the political implications of the split within the JP. Neither did the exclusion of Emile Brun for embezzlement in 1931.¹³⁷

Royalists united in siding with Victor Perret in the disputes which divided the parliamentary right. The AF therefore attacked "le petit agité Henri de Kérillis [qui] va venir prochainement à Lyon pour essayer de démolir l'action de M Victor Perret, jugé trop national parce que trop fidèle à l'action de M Louis Marin".¹³⁸ Similarly the JP were denounced for their leader's Briandism.¹³⁹ At the same time the royalists attempted to co-operate with the radical wing of the JP.¹⁴⁰

130 AN F⁷ 13 235, 11-1-1930. The police reported that few JP attended a meeting of the *Républicains nationaux* at the headquarters of the JP in January 1930. The audience was composed largely of elderly men.

131 AN F⁷ 13 235.

132 *Nouvelliste*, 25-2-1930.

133 AN F⁷ 13 235, 27-2-1930: "disant qu'il y avait assez de victimes et que, au revolver il fallait répondre par le revolver, à la matraque par la matraque".

134 *Nouvelliste*, 24-11-1930.

135 The Taittinger moment had passed.

136 AN F⁷ 13 205, 15-3-1929, 11-5-1929, 7-11-1929.

137 Fleuret, op. cit., p. 17: An interview with a former AF activist reveals that Brun had collected considerable sums from small industrialists and artisans of Cours and Thizy for the purpose of an action against the Republic. The interviewee believed the collection to have been for personal ends.

138 *La République lyonnaise*, 4-4-1931. Another example is a reprint of Perret's call for union of the right (28-3-1931). Marin was also praised at the previously mentioned joint JP-AF meeting.

139 On the national level relations between Maurras and the Taittinger-Kérillis axis had been poor since 1929. *La République lyonnaise*, 13-9-1930.

140 F⁷ 13 205, 18-12-1929.

AF and the Federation recruited in the same “traditionalist” milieu. Both attempted not so much to turn the clock back as to control the direction of change, and to reconcile economic progress with hierarchy. The old aristocracy, *La République lyonnaise* said, had gone. But a monarch would create a new elite. It would combine the aristocracy, “où se transmettant encore, par le sang et l’éducation, les aptitudes à certains emplois diplomatiques et militaire” with businessmen, fathers of families, practitioners of charity, elements of the intelligentsia and the artisanate.¹⁴¹ Finally, the AF resembled Perret’s Federation in its possession of a proto-fascist sub-current. The monarch was often presented in terms similar to those of used by “republican” defenders of the strong state, as a leader independent of the sectional interests. Restored corporations would not govern, but would simply advise the monarch.¹⁴²

Elsewhere in France the Tardieu reforms had led to a reaction in the form of autonomous proto-fascist movements: *Défense paysan* and the Tax-payers’ League. In the Rhône Victor Perret had been able to take the head of the anti-reform movement, thereby neutralizing the far right. Furthermore, the Rhône lacked a strong tradition of Christian democracy, which in Brittany had prepared the way for Dorgèrism.¹⁴³ In the late 1920s the JAC were only just beginning to establish themselves. The USE the most powerful of the agrarian associations, was able to co-opt Dorgères’s movement when it did attempt to establish itself in the Rhône. Meanwhile the small business *Ligue des contribuables* was inhibited by the entrenchment of Radicalism in Lyon. In subsequent years, however, it became increasingly difficult for established parties to contain the far right.

The 6th February 1934 in the Rhône

Paris was not the only city in France to experience disturbances on 6 February 1934. In Lyon the first demonstrations were the work of nationalist students who on 11th January staged a mock funeral of the Republic. Even according to a hostile *Lyon républicain* the coffin was followed by several hundred people. Posters appeared in unaccustomed numbers; political meetings multiplied.¹⁴⁴ *Action Française*, which contained the most lurid accounts of the Stavisky scandal, sold unusually well. By 3 February the police already felt that “contrairement à l’habitude, une partie du public a paru considérer avec une certaine sympathie les manifestations du parti royaliste”.¹⁴⁵

On 6 February the five o’clock edition of *Salut Public* contained a call from the JP for the population to assemble at six. At 6.30 the JP themselves arrived and began to distribute tracts. They were soon joined by a group of *Camelots*, and by mem-

¹⁴¹ *La République lyonnaise*, 5-3-1932.

¹⁴² *ibid.*

¹⁴³ S. Berger, *op. cit.*, passim. P. Barral, “Les Syndicats bretons de cultivateurs-cultivants

¹⁴⁴ AN F⁷ 13 040, 3-2-1934: the police estimated 4,000 per day from the 5-12-1934.

¹⁴⁵ AN F⁷ 13 040, 3-2-1934.

bers of the *Croix de Feu*. Within a short time a crowd estimated by the police at several thousand had gathered. News from Paris of shootings raised the temperature. Amidst cries of “Ca ira, les députés, on les pendra”, demonstrators attacked trams and formed columns. But although the police, on their own admission, were over-run, attempts by demonstrators to force their way up the rue République to the Hôtel de Ville, were not well coordinated. Communists meanwhile fought with police on the Place Terreaux in front of the Town Hall. From about 9.00 until 10.00 p.m. there was a lull. Then there was a second, lesser demonstration from 10.00 p.m.

There were further demonstrations on the two following nights. They were now met by CGT counter-demonstrations. The two sides insulted each other with cries of “Vive le roi!” and “les Soviets partout! Café chairs were used as weapons. Shots were fired, each side blaming the other. There were 80 arrests.¹⁴⁶

What is the significance of these riots? If we are to agree with René Rémond that Parisian events represented merely a demonstration which turned to tragedy, “not even a riot”, then Lyonnais events are barely worthy of notice.¹⁴⁷ Rémond points to the lack of a co-ordinated plan for a putsch and the presence of only [sic] 30,000 leaguers amongst the demonstrators on the Place de la Concorde.¹⁴⁸ He argues that the mass of demonstrators did not know what they wanted. They were easily calmed by a mere change of majorities. In part Rémond is right. Yet a more nuanced interpretation is possible. The rioters of 6th February could be seen as part of a coalition of conservatives and fascists. Had they managed to break through police barriers, it is possible that the outcome might have been a government of conservative parliamentarians, fascists and representatives of “non-political” bodies such as the UNC, probably voted by parliament. Fascists would have been only a minority in such a government. And whilst may be true that many demonstrators were content with Doumergue, many others were not. In other words, a fascist takeover was not imminent on 6th February. Yet there was a conjunction of fascists and conservatives and widespread readiness to accept the resolution of political problems by violent means. This interpretation is also of use in understanding events in Lyon.

Clearly the riots in Lyon were less serious than those in Paris. There was no sustained attempt to invade the *Hôtel de Ville*. Had this been a priority of the leagues then they could have assembled on the place Terreaux, instead of half a mile away at Place Bellecour. Partly, however, this was because of the symbolic significance of Bellecour to the extreme right. This enormous square, once known as the Place Louis-le-Grand, on which stood a large equestrian bronze of Louis XIV, was the traditional

146 This account compiled from daily press in Lyon, and from AN F⁷ 13 040, 3-2-1934 and 3-3-1934.

147 Rémond, *op. cit.*, pp. 283-5.

148 There must, in reality, have been *some* co-ordination. For example, G. Howlett, *op. cit.*, ch. 2, reveals an ultimatum by the leagues to la Rocque in order to persuade him to take part.

starting point of its demonstrations. They would then go via the rue République to confront either the Town Hall or the Prefecture.¹⁴⁹

Also relevant are the words and deeds of organized participants. The *Croix de Feu* played only played a minor part. No doubt orders from Paris advised caution. The shock troops of the league, the VN and the dispos, had only been created in December 1933. The *Croix de Feu* only really moved to the front of the political stage after 6 February. The *Croix de Feu* will therefore be dealt with in the following section.

It goes without saying that royalists were opposed to the existing régime. It is sufficient to note the league's response to the riots themselves: "née dans le sang de la Commune, Marianne à voulu encore se repeindre de sang avant de mourir".¹⁵⁰ This does not, of course, mean that the royalists intended to overthrow the Republic on that particular day.

Most interesting is the attitude of the JP. In spite of their lesser numbers the JP played a central role on 6th February. They occupied a pivotal position between the fascist and the parliamentary right, and through their access to the press they were better able to communicate with the public at large. The JP were responsible for the only tract known to have been distributed on the 6th February in Lyon. It was more moderate than a notorious leaflet calling for a "national revolution" handed out by the JP on the Place de la Concorde.¹⁵¹ The Lyon tract begins with an "Appeal to the People of France". The sacrifice of Prefect of Police Jean Chiappe to the communists [sic], was seen as the beginning of a purge (une formidable hécatombe) of army, judiciary and administration. "Le régime des fiches va renaître. Le délit d'opinion est rétablie":

Laisserez-vous établir la dictature d'une clan? Laisserez-vous étrangler nos libertés? Petits fonctionnaires, indépendants et patriotes, laissez-vous supprimer votre gagne-pain? L'opinion publique doit clamer sa volonté. Devant la décomposition parlementaire il imposera silence aux factions et donnera à la nation des chefs digne d'elle.
Un véritable complot se trame au dedans et au dehors contre notre pays.

APPEL au PEUPLE de Lyon

Assez de scandales, assez de vols, assez de politiciens protecteurs patentés des escrocs. Une majorité qui couvre les détresseurs de l'Épargne se rend complice. Nous ne jetons pas à tort ou à travers la suspicion contre les innocents, mais nous exigeons une justice inexorable contre tous les coupables quelques hautes placés qu'ils soient. L'autorité en France sera respecté le jour où elle sera respectable. Que le parlement se nettoie, ou le peuple s'en chargera.¹⁵²

The most striking thing about the tract is its ambiguity.¹⁵³ On the one hand it can be interpreted as fascist in its appeal to a strong leader who would impose silence on factions, in its demand for purges, and in the fact that it was distributed by men who showed themselves to be ready to attack both public property and the police. On the

149 Hence the symbolic significance of the Prefecture's insistence that Jeanne d'Arc demonstrations begin and end on the "republican" left bank of the Rhône.

150 *République lyonnaise*, 6-1-1943, 10-2-1934.

151 Reprinted in L. Bonnevey, *Le six février*, Paris, 1934.

152 Reprinted in *Salut Public*, 7-2-1934. The JP exchanged more than words on 6th February.

153 Rémond, op. cit., p. 284. René Rémond dismisses the Parisian version on the grounds that the JP "worshipped a verbal tradition". The Lyonnais tract is less radical, notably in not calling for a national revolution, a term popularised by Hitler.

other, the tract implies that not all parliamentarians are guilty. This *could* be interpreted as leaving the door open for a government of *Union nationale*, and probably it was meant to be so understood. But it is significant that there is no explicit demand for a change of majorities. The tract is perhaps best understood as an effort to reconcile fascist and authoritarian conservative viewpoints. This makes sense if we remember that the JP themselves were chronically split between fascists and conservatives.

This is confirmed by the fact that in the weeks before the riots, most JP had rallied to Taittinger's call for a "national revolution"—a slogan popularized by Hitler. J-H. de la Barrière declared in October 1933 that "la période humanitaire, démocratique, internationaliste de l'après-guerre est une période périmée". Outdated institutions were about to be swept away. The only alternatives were either "social revolution" or a "redressement nationale par l'autorité dans l'ordre et dans l'autorité".¹⁵⁴ There was no distinction between democracy and parliamentarianism here.¹⁵⁵ Other JP continued to act in alliance with the *Républicains nationaux*--at this time organization of a school for public speakers was their main preoccupation.¹⁵⁶ Yet even this group approved, for their own reasons, the riots of 6th February.

As for the mass of demonstrators, their motives and intentions cannot be known. The best evidence is the verdict of the police:

Ces événements, sans revêtir un caractère d'émeute aussi grave qu'à Paris ont néanmoins révélé un état d'esprit populaire inconnu jusqu'ici à Lyon. En effet les véritables militants extrémistes ne dépassaient guère dans l'ensemble le chiffre de 7 à 800 personnes et il apparaît que leur rôle d'agitateurs n'auraient eu qu'un effet assez restreint s'ils n'avaient opéré comme un ferment favorable dans un milieu de plusieurs milliers de spectateurs indubitablement sympathiques aux exactions de toutes sortes commis par les manifestants.¹⁵⁷

The example of the Rhône confirms amply that *le six février* inaugurated a period of heightened interest in politics.

What is more important in the present context is that few conservatives were ready to condemn either the riots themselves or the notion that a government could be overthrown by street action. There is no need to repeat what has already been said about the attitudes of conservatives like Victor Perret. Nor is it surprising that the *Nouvelliste* should see the Stavisky affair as confirmation that neither the free market nor Christian morality any longer regulated affairs between men.¹⁵⁸ We also saw in the previous chapter that Christian democrats like Jules Maire in Tarare and Maurice

154 *L'Alerte*, October, 1933—my italics. On the evening of 7th February de la Barrière was arrested at Place Bellecour.

155 Regional delegate Auguste Allaix placed greater emphasis on the need for constitutional reform, especially a strong and democratically elected president. But even if we leave aside the plebiscitary element of fascism, Allaix can hardly be described as a democrat, for he also called for action in the streets, national revolution, and "l'épuration nécessaire" (*L'Alerte*, December 1933, January and February 1934).

156 *L'Alerte*, November 1933.

157 AN F⁷ 13 040, 3-3-1934. See also AN F⁷ 13 040, 3-2-1934: "contrairement à l'habitude, une partie du public a paru considérer avec une certaine sympathie les manifestations du parti royalistes, lequel n'avait d'ailleurs rien négligé pour sa propagande: meetings, journaux et affiches".

158 *Nouvelliste*, 20-1-1934. Furthermore, the *Nouvelliste's* headline on the morning of 6th February, "Paris tout entier sera ce soir dans la rue pour crier son indignation et manifester son mépris de l'injustice", was a clear incitement to Lyonais to do the same.

Vicaire in Lyon approved of the events.¹⁵⁹ Some members of the administrative council of the *Chronique sociale* welcomed the riots. Similarly, Humbert Isaac, a reputedly unimpeachable Republican wrote in *La Voix du combattant* that without the demonstrations “la République auraient vécu”.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, it is difficult to find an unequivocal condemnation of *le six février* anywhere in the political or economic establishment.

There was in early 1934 a broad consensus stretching from Christian democrats to the leagues, that the authority of the state should be strengthened. Most conservatives agreed that economic recovery depended upon cuts in public spending, and therefore upon elimination of “sectional interests” from parliament. This is not to agree with Michel Margairaz that the right as a whole was united around a fascist programme, for the common denominator in this coalition—reform of the state—was at a much lower level than this. Once in power the coalition rapidly fell apart. Nonetheless, the broad appeal of anti-parliamentarianism may be seen as legitimizing the activities of the leagues. These movements, moreover, contained fascist elements which were increasingly strong.

The crisis of the left also worked to the benefit of the leagues. This is not the place to go into the history of the Radical Party. Suffice it to recall the emergence of a proto-fascist small business movement in 1932. In Paris the equivalent movement, the *Ligue des contribuables*, actually participated in the riots of the 6th February. The attitude of the Lyonnais equivalent, the UF, is unknown. But that one of the bastions of the democratic and republican tradition should become detached from its leaders in this way was clearly a development fraught with danger.

It is possible to see in the period from 1932 to the 6th February 1934 the beginnings of a crisis which might have led to the emergence of a genuine fascist threat. One must, of course, be careful not to over-state the argument. In early 1934 the extreme right remained weak and dispersed. The bulk of active supporters were probably students.¹⁶² Furthermore, whilst the extreme right was increasingly able to set the tone for conservatives in general, it was for the moment prepared to accept that its programme might be realized through Parliament. Both AF and the JP were at first prepared to accept Doumergue—providing a number of demanding and undemocratic conditions were fulfilled. They also tended to distinguish between the “unimpeachable” Doumergue and his scheming ministers.

In sum, the example of the Rhône suggests that France in February 1934 was not Germany in January 1933. A more revealing comparison would be with Germany in March 1930. In Germany in that year, authoritarianism was a part of the political

¹⁵⁹ See chapter nine.

¹⁶⁰ Quoted in Prost, *Les anciens combattants*, vol 1, p. 164.

¹⁶¹ M Margairaz, op. cit., passim: “les différentes familles de la droite agissent comme un tout fonctionnel”.

¹⁶² AN F² 2667, 9-2-1934. The one participant whose occupation is known was a student at the medical faculty.

agenda; a left wing government had fallen over the question of deflation, which was linked in business circles to roll-back of social reform. A parliamentary conservative coalition dependent upon special powers was installed. The election of 1928 had shown that the conservative Weimar parties were losing support to proto-fascist sectional parties which in the elections of 1930 would be swept up by the Nazis. From this point on, however, the histories of France and Germany diverge. Whilst in the form of the *Croix de Feu* a mass fascist party did emerge, it did so in circumstances in which it stood little chance of coming to power. To explain why this was so is our next task.

From 6th February to June 1936

After 6 February the tone of the JP became ever more violent, though its moderate current was not eliminated.¹⁶³ Auguste Allaix declared in February that the “national revolution”—a term borrowed from Hitler and Mussolini—was under way. In May he reminded leaguers that they had the duty and the right to keep arms in their houses.¹⁶⁴ At about the same time as Victor Perret, Allaix turned against Doumergue. He demanded rule by decree, dissolution of the Chamber, suppression of “anti-national” parties and Masonic lodges, revocations of civil servants and strict controls on immigration.¹⁶⁵

But by now the JP counted for little in comparison with the *Croix de Feu*. By the end of 1934 the latter eclipsed all rival leagues. In this section we will firstly explain why the *Croix de Feu* became pre-eminent. Then we will ask whether or not this league was fascist. Thirdly, we will explain why, in spite of the crisis of the constitutional right in 1934 and 1935, the *Croix de Feu* did not come to power.

The central reason for the success of the *Croix de Feu* was its ability to present itself as independent in political and social terms.¹⁶⁶ The centrality of this theme can be seen in a VN tract of 1935:

163 *L'Alerte*, April, 1934. It was now represented by André Gacon-Camoz, who was also an activist in the Federation. He too referred to a “national revolution”, but for him it meant merely an elected president and constitutional reform.

164 *L'Alerte*, May, 1934: “Vous avez le droit et le devoir d’être armée et bien armés, si vous tenez à votre liberté, à votre vie. Chaque membre de la ligue doit donc posséder chez lui son équipement complet, afin d’être prêt à marcher au premier signal. N’avez aucune crainte. Si la loi vous défend d’avoir sur vous des armes, elle ne vous empêche point d’avoir chez vous des armes pour protéger votre vie, en cas de besoin. Il y a donc un nuance et vous avez le droit pour vous”.

165 *L'Alerte*, September, 1934.

166 AN 451 AP 81: in a letter of 18-7-1930 Louis Gros, the first president of the *Croix de Feu* in the Rhone wrote: “Vous n’ignorez pas que notre association reste jalousement indépendant des partis politiques quels qu’ils soient et tient avant tout choses à son indépendance”.

<p style="text-align: center;"> Les Volontaires Nationaux sont Farouchement indépendants Solidement organisés Leur programme est simple Servir la France </p>
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To be perceived as independent was vital for a movement which promised reconciliation of a divided nation. In this respect the *Croix de Feu* were well placed simply by virtue of being a new movement, untainted by the compromises forced upon the AF and JP.¹⁶⁷ But this does not explain the success of the *Croix de Feu* relative to a movement like *Solidarité française*, of which the corporatist and authoritarian programme was more or less identical. The *Croix de Feu*'s above party image was cultivated in a variety of ways.

Firstly, the *Croix de Feu* was able to exploit its proximity to the veterans' movement. It made much of its status as an elite among veterans, though with the disadvantage that in the early years many had joined simply for the prestige of wearing its insignia.¹⁶⁸ In conservative eyes the *génération de feu* was synonymous with fraternity, class collaboration, independence and the national interest. Also the *Croix de Feu* appropriated some of the prestige of the army as embodiment of the nation. The reference to the veterans' movement could also be incorporated into a radical conservatism. The idea of service in the trenches implied both submission to hierarchy and a sense of equality in the war generation. In this way it could help to contain the contradictions of a movement of "conservative revolt", preventing it from turning into a general assault on the established order.

The nature of the league's leaders reinforced the claim to independence. At first the *Croix de Feu* had drawn some of its leaders from the JP. Louis Marchal was the best known.¹⁶⁹ Another leader, Morin-Pons, was well known as a member of a banking family. In the course of 1934 and 1935 the *Croix de Feu* able to eliminate too visible representatives both of big capital and of other political movements.¹⁷⁰ The *Croix de Feu* were now led by political unknowns, with a liberal sprinkling of retired lieutenant-colonels.¹⁷¹ Possession of a mass party gave the *Croix de Feu* a degree of autonomy not possessed either by notable parties or by other parties of the far right.

167 There is therefore something in Sternhell's claim that the pure fascism of intellectuals, which claims to be above parties, is corrupted by contact with reality. The reason, however, is not because "pure fascism" really is "neither left nor right", as Sternhell would have it, but because even fascist intellectuals are not completely able to distinguish the general interest from the bourgeois interest.

168 *La Relève*, 7-12-1930.

169 For example, Colonel Chêne and Charles Favre-Gilly, both of whom had been presidents of the JP.

170 This pattern coincides with that identified by Philippe Machefer, ("Les Croix de Feu", op. cit., passim), who argues that in the course of 1935 la Rocque attempted to secure the independence of the *Croix de Feu* from financiers like Pierre Pucheu and Ernest Mercier.

171 In the PSF, and probably also in the *Croix de Feu*, it was official policy not to choose as leaders either businessmen or those who had occupied prominent positions in other leagues.

Thirdly, the *Croix de Feu* were careful not to involve themselves in political alliances. This was one reason why la Rocque had been reluctant to participate in the demonstrations of 6th February. Even this was turned to advantage. Louis Marchal answered criticism of la Rocque's temporization by stressing that the *Croix de Feu* would act only where success was certain—he did not reject the principle of an attempt to invade the Chamber.¹⁷² In this way the *Croix de Feu* were able to cultivate the idea that la Rocque somehow held the fate of the nation in his hands.¹⁷³ After 6 February the league continued to keep its distance from the rest of the extreme right. The *Croix de Feu* did not adhere to the *Front national*, formed in June 1934. This body grouped in the Rhône the JP and *Solidarité française*, and enjoyed the informal support of the AF.¹⁷⁴ In 1936 the *Croix de Feu* did not even participate in the committee which had traditionally organized the Joan of Arc parade.

Pierre Milza sees the absence of contact between the *Croix de Feu* and the extreme right as evidence that the former were not fascist. He also makes much of links to Tardieu in 1931-2.¹⁷⁵ Apart from the obvious objection that history is littered with alliances between fascists and the parliamentary right, P. Milza makes too much of support for Tardieu, which had been an episode in the pre-history of the league, and which in the Rhône had amounted to very little in any case.¹⁷⁶ In 1934 and 1935 la Rocque's league were keen to dissociate themselves from the parliamentary right. The *Croix de Feu* distanced itself from the Doumergue government more rapidly than any of its rivals: la Rocque's description on 7th February of the government as "un pansement provisoire sur la gangrène", was widely publicised in the Rhône. To be sure the dressing should not be ripped off, but the *Croix de Feu* should hold themselves ready to clean out the wound.¹⁷⁷ We have seen that the *Croix de Feu* had fewer contacts with the Federation than the JP or even AF.

So much for the reasons why the *Croix de Feu* outdistanced its rivals. But does all of this amount to fascism? Some have seen the *Croix de Feu* programme as too "vague" to be fascist. It is certainly difficult to ascertain la Rocque's programme from his *Service public*, published in 1934, on which most historians have relied. Refusal to pronounce on questions of policy, was, however, deliberate, as the failure of the *Croix de Feu* in the Rhône to endow the movement with a regular journal suggests. In fact "vague" is not really a good way of describing *Croix de Feu* ideology.

172 One of the grievances against la Rocque of Paul Chopine, a former leader of the dispos in Paris, was that the *Croix de Feu* had managed to appropriate the glory of 6th February without having done anything on that day (Paul Chopine, *Six ans chez les Croix de Feu*, Paris, 1935).

173 For example *La République lyonnaise* mockingly reported a *Croix de Feu* member who believed that la Rocque "tenait Laval".

174 AN F⁷ 13 028, 16-6-1934. The royalists declared their willingness to participate in "action" against the communists.

175 Milza, op. cit., p. He also mentions La Rocque's saving of Laval in November 1935, when he agreed to a truce...

176 G. Howlett, op. cit. pp. points out that there was in policy terms little convergence between *Croix de Feu* and Tardieu.

177 *Nouvelliste*, 10-2-1934. Note again the images of the war.

More exactly the movement displaced questions of policy into a future where they would be resolved by a putative corporate system, and where those responsible for dividing the nation would have been eliminated. In spite of this deliberate imprecision, it is possible to detect a few simple themes in *Croix de Feu* propaganda. But these cannot be analysed separately from the actions of the movement: the *Croix de Feu* were expert in the art of propaganda by deed.

Restoration of state independence makes sense as a slogan in a context where the state was perceived as having fallen into the hands of sectional and occult interests. As André Rossignol put it "il faut un Etat indépendant et fort, affranchi de la dictature de l'argent, affranchi de la dictature occulte des loges qui nous gouvernent aujourd'hui dans des buts internationaux et mystérieux". Rossignol goes on to outline a series of constitutional reforms. They are broadly similar to those demanded by the Federation, and, moreover by just about every other group on the far right, including *Solidarité française*, which is generally seen as fascist.¹⁷⁸ There is therefore no need to go into detail. The lynchpin is a strong president, whose mode of election was never mentioned,¹⁷⁹ whose function would be to arbitrate conflicting interests expressed through a corporative system. Parliament would occupy only a secondary role.¹⁸⁰ Corporations would be based on "de-politicized" syndicates, which would be forbidden to organize on the national level.¹⁸¹ Suspicion of pluralism is revealed by the notion of one militant that "Ce mouvement est décidé à nettoyer ce pays des éléments troubles qui l'agitent et à assurer à la France une vie d'ordre et d'honneur: la franc-maçonnerie est la principale responsable du désarroi de notre pays".¹⁸²

It should also be borne in mind that constitutional questions were not a major theme of *Croix de Feu* propaganda.¹⁸³ Much more common were ambiguous denunciations of parliamentarianism and electoralism. Rossignol, for example, asked "croyez vous vraiment que le luxe de ce parlementarisme actuel qui n'a rien résolu des problèmes du jour corresponde aux angoissantes réalités de demain?"¹⁸⁴ During the campaign for the 1936 elections *Le Flambeau* declared that it did not expect renovation to come from a failed electoral system, but that the league would nonetheless attempt to ensure that good candidates were put forward.¹⁸⁵ Certainly there is ambiguity here, for this *could* be seen as expressing a preference for a different system of

178 *Solidarité française du sud-est*, 7-2-1934 and 12-3-1934: A strong elected seven year presidency, universal suffrage, female vote, family vote, extra-parliamentary ministers, parliament to lose the right to propose financial laws, corporatism etc.

179 So much for the plebiscitary tradition.

180 *Flambeau du sud-est*, 15-10-1934.

181 As la Rocque put it in *Service Public*, the elective principle would be retained—the aim of the *Croix de Feu* was rather to "écarter les inconvénients du suffrage universel, aujourd'hui admis dans tous les pays du monde", by means of constitutional reforms.

182 *Nouvelliste*, 19-6-1935.

183 Rossignol's article in October 1934 is the only published discussion of the issue in the Rhône in the entire period from February 1934 until the dissolution of the league.

184 *Le Flambeau du sud-est*, October 1934.

185 *Le Flambeau du sud-est*, April 1936.

voting. But on the other hand there is no clear distinction between opposition to parliament and opposition to democracy *tout court*. There is evidence that the national leaders of the league made no such distinction.¹⁸⁶

The radicalism of the *Croix de Feu* is underlined by the anti-elitist and anti-capitalist current. The message that the *Croix de Feu* were “à l’abri des partis et des politiciens, contre la haute finance internationale”, was hammered home in countless tracts.¹⁸⁷ Indeed, the principal argument deployed to refute the idea that the *Croix de Feu* were fascist was that they were independent of capitalism.¹⁸⁸ This anti-elitism was not merely rhetorical. The programme of the *Croix de Feu* included measures such as state control of the bank of France, and the acceptance that temporarily at least the state would have to take a leading role in the organization of corporations.¹⁸⁹ Anti-capitalism must be understood in relation to the recruitment of the league among the “anti-establishment” bourgeoisie and lower middle class. It translates both a long term crisis of the liberal-silk hegemony in Lyon and a conjunctural feeling that the establishment had failed in its tasks. In future, France would be governed by a new elite drawn from front-line veterans, a familiar notion in the *ancien combattant* movement. One militant described himself as an old soldier returning to service to save France for a second time: “pour refaire la France aussi pur qu’elle l’avait été pendant quatre ans et demi”.¹⁹⁰

Related to anti-elitism was a quasi-insurrectionary motif. This is implicit even in Louis Marchal’s defence of the *Croix de Feu*’s inaction on 6th February: “[la calme] est conforme à la consigne des Croix de Feu «ne se mêler à aucune agitation sauf quand il s’agit d’une action forte et qui réussira»”.¹⁹¹ As he put it on another occasion, honest men were not obliged to follow those with dirty hands.¹⁹² The national leadership encouraged such a spirit by repeated references to H-Hour and D-Day, and by frequent “alerts”.¹⁹³ This does not, as will become clear in a moment, mean that the *Croix de Feu* aimed at violent overthrow of the Republic.

This brings us to the paramilitarism of the *Croix de Feu*. Its members were, like those of rival movements, engaged in “routine” conflicts such as those between

186 In private the national leadership of the *Croix de Feu* did not make this distinction. In a document drawn up to explain the league’s attitude in forthcoming elections, it is stated that although Hitler and Mussolini had achieved “interesting results” through electoral methods, they could not be used by the *Croix de Feu*: “Il est hors de doute que le mouvement Croix de Feu est d’inspiration anti-parlementaire. Beaucoup de membres éprouvent une véritable répugnance pour les élections. Ceux-là ont données leur adhésion aux Croix de Feu comme un protestation contre le system politique actuel et parce qu’ils des formes et des possibilités d’actions politique nouvelles”. quoted in Howlett, op. cit., p.

187 ADR 4m 236, tract of December 1935.

188 *Nouvelliste*, 4-10-1935.

189 *Le Flambeau du sud-est*, April 1936: programme for the elections of April and May.

190 *Nouvelliste*, 4-10-1935.

191 *Nouvelliste*, 15-2-1934.

192 *Nouvelliste*, 23-1-1934.

193 It is also worth pointing out that amongst the leadership of the *Croix de Feu* in the Rhône were men such as Charles Favre-Gilly, who warned in the journal of the *JP* that after the unarmed demonstrations in Paris, “qu’une autre fois les Nationaux descendront armés et bien armés, afin de pouvoir résister à égalité avec les forces policières qui seraient tentés de recommencer leurs belles prouesses” (*L’Alerte*, 14-2-1934).

paper sellers in the rue République. Chance meetings of leaguers and anti-fascists sometimes got out of hand. In November 1935 four dispos returning from a demonstration got out of their car to rip down anti-fascist posters in Villeurbanne, whereupon they were shot at by a pro-communist café owner. One of the dispos was seriously injured in the face.¹⁹⁴ In Villefranche in the summer of 1934, a young metal worker who was a member of both the *Volontaires nationaux* and *Action française* shot an adherent of the SFIO youth group.¹⁹⁵

More important are the secret mobilizations held by the league from the winter of 1934. René Rémond sees these as “political boy-scoutism for grown-ups”. At most the *Croix de Feu* borrowed the outer trappings of fascism.¹⁹⁶ A recent thesis on the *Croix de Feu* maintains that La Rocque’s purpose was to sustain the enthusiasm of his followers whilst keeping them out of trouble.¹⁹⁷ These views are open to criticism. Boy-scoutism was designed amongst other things as preparation for military training and war. Form and content of a movement are not in practice easy to distinguish. Ritual submission to authoritarian discipline is in fact central to a movement of which the goal was reconciliation of a fractured society. Even if such trappings were borrowed—doubtless in some measure they were—one would still have to explain why these particular symbols were appropriated by this particular movement. The second argument rests on the belief that La Rocque was playing a kind of double game, aiming at the transformation of the league into a conventional political party. This is a teleological argument, for which, moreover, there is no evidence other than the fact that the PSF moved in that direction.¹⁹⁸ A sounder method is to look at these mobilizations in their context.

The use of the term “paramilitary” to describe the famous motorized sorties of the *Croix de Feu* is not misplaced. In October 1934 instructions arrived from Paris ordering that in case of “serious events” in any part of the country local leaders were to convoke all members. They were to assemble on the outskirts of the town, where drivers would receive sealed envelopes containing their destination, which were to be opened in the course of the journey. The eventual destination would be unknown even to the regional leaders. At about the same time leaders were required to take the oath of “unquestioning” obedience referred to above.¹⁹⁹ This tactic was adopted partly as a defensive measure, for since February 1934 the meetings of the far right had been sys-

194 *Lyon républicain, Nouvelliste*, 28 and 29-11-1935.

195 ADR 4m 269, report of the Sub-Prefect of Villefranche; *La République lyonnaise*, 21-7-1934. The Sub-Prefect believed this to have been a premeditated attack. The culprit received three months imprisonment plus a fine.

196 Rémond, op. cit., p. 290. Pierre Milza admits that these manoeuvres, with their elaborate rituals, are similar to those of “totalitarian” movements, but stresses that *Croix de Feu* violence remained at a symbolic level. Since P. Milza does not consider the implications of a symbolic appeal to violence, René Rémond’s distinction between formal borrowings from totalitarian régimes and the essence of the movement seems to lie behind this argument (Milza, op. cit., pp. 135-6).

197 Howlett, op. cit., passim.

198 In fact the only evidence we possess of the league’s private intentions suggests the opposite. see footnote 186.

199 AN F⁷ 13 028, 27-10-1934. See also page 261.

tematically disrupted by anti-fascists.²⁰⁰ Secret mobilizations represented both a tactical retreat and a radicalization of the *Croix de Feu* in that it reinforced the semi-clandestine nature of the league.

Subsequently almost all *Croix de Feu* demonstrations conformed to this pattern. Since the supposedly secret instructions for the first such rally fell into the hands of an anti-fascist newspaper we are well informed about it. The plan was for two days of events, to be camouflaged behind a fund-raising sale and a musical evening. On the morning of Saturday 22nd December la Rocque was to arrive unannounced by plane. Dispos were to assemble at Place Tolozan in Lyon, from where they would depart for a rally at Bourgoin in Isère. They would keep badges and arm-bands in their pockets until the order to don them came from section leaders. Members were also warned “aucune initiative personnelle doit être prise”. The orders concluded with the instruction that the note should be burned once its contents had been memorized.²⁰¹

In the event things did not go as planned. On Saturday morning *Lyon républicain* appealed for a “riposte ouvrière et démocratique” at place Tolozan.²⁰² At the last moment the organizers changed the assembly point, but a number of *Croix de Feu* went to place Tolozan where they were met by a hostile crowd. The demonstration was not, however, a complete fiasco, for 200 dispos were able to set off from the alternative destination. On the following day 3,000 people heard la Rocque speak at a cinema in Lyon.²⁰³ A circular from Marchal announced that the affair had proven that the *Croix de Feu* were a force against which attempts at revolution would be broken.²⁰⁴

This fiasco should not detract from the significance of such manoeuvres. They fall into three categories. Firstly there were major nationwide mobilizations such as those commemorating the battle of the Marne in September 1935. According to the press 5,000 *Croix de Feu* from all over the south-east assembled at Grand-Lemps (Isère). Pierre-Joseph Arminjon, a *Nouvelliste* journalist who accompanied the column from Lyon described enthusiastically how the manoeuvre had been organized in scrupulous secrecy at twenty-four hours notice.²⁰⁵ It is perhaps this kind of exercise which comes closest to Rémond’s “boy scoutism”. But Arminjon was in 1937 to describe with the same boyish enthusiasm his participation in a squad which helped break a strike of farm workers in the department of the Marne. He described the following exchange when he reported for duty:

- Vous ne craignez pas la bagarre?
- Je suis ancien... enfin... dissous si vous voulez.

200 Weng Ting Lung, “L’Historique et la doctrine des Croix de Feu”, *Thèse de droite*, Nice, 1970, pp. 46-50.

201 *La Flèche*, 29-12-1934.

202 *Lyon républicain* 22-12-1934.

203 ADR 4m 236, 26-12-1934.

204 *La Flèche*, 19-1-1935.

205 *Nouvelliste*, 23-9-1935. The Lyonnais leadership was informed of the route on departure, and of the final destination whilst on the road.

- Bien, bien; mais attention: pas de politique. Vous êtes uniquement là pour sauver la récolte.²⁰⁶

The Marne mobilization was more than a mere picnic. It is hardly credible that they were not seen by participants as preparation for some sort of future action, or that they were not designed to overawe and intimidate political opponents.²⁰⁷

A second category of demonstrations were not merely "harmless" expeditions to the fields. Rather they were organized sorties into working class suburbs, probably organized on departmental initiative. As the orders for one motorcade put it, "the greatest secrecy must be maintained in order to retain the advantage of surprise".²⁰⁸ In 1935 there were a series of expeditions to such destinations as St. Etienne, Villefranche, Vienne, and Givors. The St. Etienne motorcade, in which 500 dispos travelled in a convoy of 104 cars was probably the most impressive after the Marne commemoration.²⁰⁹ In late August 1935 a caravan of dispos arrived in the industrial commune of Décines, a few kilometres to the west of Lyon in Isère. They proceeded to fill the town and according to the mayor to annoy the inhabitants. A counter-demonstration was rapidly organized. As the dispos emerged from a meeting projectiles were thrown and revolver shots exchanged. A number of *Croix de Feu* were injured and their cars damaged.²¹⁰ It is difficult not to see an intimidatory purpose in such activities. The unexpected arrival of a motorized and highly organized convoy of dispos in an overwhelmingly working class area, in a period when cars were still a rare sight outside of affluent city centres, cannot be interpreted in any other way.²¹¹ When the extreme social and political segregation of the Lyonnais agglomeration is taken into account, along with the concentration of *Croix de Feu* membership in the bourgeois centre of the city, then motorcades take on the character almost of an invasion of a foreign country. They can also be seen as a ripost to increasingly frequent left wing demonstrations in the centre of the city. Philippe Burrin distinguishes *Croix de Feu* violence, designed merely to intimidate the left, from that of the Nazis, who provoked disorder in order to pose as the sole rampart against anarchy.²¹² Yet in

206 *Nouvelliste*, 28-7-1937.

207 As a *Nouvelliste* editorialist put it, "aurait-on il y a trente ans mobilisé des dizaines de milliers d'hommes a cinquante kilomètres de leur résidence pendant tout une journée, en les astreignant a porter leur repas, uniquement pour leurs faire accomplir quelques mouvements d'ensemble et entendre plus ou moins de discours vibrants, sinon éloquentes? Certainement non! (*Nouvelliste*, 22-6-1935).

208 *La Flèche*, 26-1-1935. Whilst the police knew that the rally was to take place, they did not know of its destination. (ADR 4m 235, January 1935). On the occasion of the Décines rally the police were at first informed of the meeting, but then told that it would not take place. (PV Conseil municipale Décines, 27-1-1936).

209 ADR 4m 235, June, 1935.

210 PV Conseil municipale Décines, 27-1-1936, (thanks to Annie Grange for this information). *Lyon républicain*, 21-9-1935.

211 Henri Dubief's description of *Croix de Feu* sorties is only a little exaggerated: "Mobilized in military formations the dispos went in for commando-style operations. Armed and motorized they would move into places where the local authority was left-wing controlled, and behave as if there was a civil war on, directing traffic at cross-roads and pretending to occupy public buildings. If the locals objected they would provoke a fight, and blood was sometimes shed in the ensuing brawls". (P. Bernard and H. Dubief, *The Decline of the Third Republic, 1914 to 1938*, Cambridge, 1988).

212 Burrin, op. cit., pp. 191-2.

practice this distinction was meaningless, for *Croix de Feu* activities could and did provoke disorder.²¹³

This emerges too from consideration of the third type of *Croix de Feu* mobilization: the set-piece parade in the centre of Lyon. From 1934 the focus of *Croix de Feu* commemorative practice shifted away from war memorials to the annual march to the statue of Joan of Arc. Partly this was because marches were forbidden on 11th November 1934. But it was also a sign of politicization.²¹⁴ Since the turn of the century Joan of Arc had been the major historical symbol of the extreme right.²¹⁵ Many saw the *fête Jeanne d'arc* as a rival to July 14th. As the *Nouvelliste* put it in May 1935, "en face de tous les dangers intérieurs et extérieurs que court la patrie, les patriotes lyonnais, sans distinction d'étiquette, unis dans le même amour du pays ont décidé de célébrer comme il convient la fête nationale".²¹⁶

The *Croix de Feu* made no effort to distance themselves from this view of the commemoration. The *Jeanne d'arc* parade represented an opportunity for a large scale paramilitary parade. The order of march for May 1936 laid down that at the head of the column were six cars, followed by twelve cyclists and 24 dispos in two ranks of twelve. Next came the regional leadership, the standard and its guard and the wreath, all protected by files of dispos on each side of the street. Then came the four sections, marching in step with one metre between files and 1.5 meters between ranks. The rear of the column was brought up by sixteen dispos and eight cyclists. Marchers were to wear a jacket, medals, arm-bands and insignia. Smoking was forbidden.²¹⁷ The military tone was further emphasized by the fact that the *Croix de Feu* column directly followed that of the army. The standard of *Croix de Feu* became visible in the Avenue Maréchal-Foch just as the 9^e regiment of *cuirassiers* disappeared.²¹⁸

The purpose of such demonstrations was firstly to over-awe opponents. The 11th November parade of 1935 was to impose "le respect à ceux qui seraient tentés de le troubler. Les événements que nous vivons nous ordonnent de montrer notre cohésion, notre discipline".²¹⁹ Secondly, such parades were an implicit reply to those of the Popular Front. The point was taken by the *Nouvelliste*, which described the 1936 Joan of Arc parade, which it believed to be the largest ever of its type in Lyon, thus:

[...] Ceux qui avaient assisté au passage des hordes communistes le premier mai sont profondément impressionnés par le contraste. Tandis que les Moscoutaires avaient défilé dans un désordre indescriptible, derrière leurs drapeaux rouges et leurs pancartes haineuses, hurlant

213 In any case it is to be doubted whether even Nazi activists *consciously* adopted a Machiavellian strategy of this type.

214 ADR 1m 171, 25-10-1935. In Villefranche in 1935 the *Croix de Feu* were excluded from the official parade of the veterans' movement for political reasons.

215 ADR 1m 171, 16-11-1928. In Lyon the statue of Joan of Arc at Place Puvis de Chavannes in the 6th arrondissement, inaugurated in 1928, had been built by a committee presided over by Antoine Sallès.

216 *Nouvelliste*, 16-5-1935. My italics.

217 ADR 1m 172, 16-5-1935, 11-11-1935, May 1936.

218 *Nouvelliste*, 11-5-1936.

219 ADR 1m 172, 11-11-1935.

«l'internationale», criant des injures à toute une partie de la population, les Croix de Feu marchent dans l'ordre et dans le silence qui font une énorme impression sur le foule.²²⁰

The parade was an allegory of the type of society desired by the *Croix de Feu*, one in which order, hierarchy and military discipline would be applied to civil society, and in which government would be in the hands of the war generation. This is reinforced by the role of women and children, who were to line the route in order to create favourable ambience among spectators. The role of the *Croix de Feu* is to serve as the unifiers of a society divided by the class hatred preached by the communists.

The place occupied by violence in the *Croix de Feu* is then a complex one.²²¹ The *Croix de Feu* presented themselves as both guardians of order and as a movement prepared to challenge the *status quo*. This apparent paradox was reconciled by the contention that the *Croix de Feu* were either acting against, or preparing to forestall, a communist action, and by the implication that the league had taken upon itself a responsibility which the state could no longer fulfil.²²² *Croix de Feu* mobilizations share characteristics of those of both the Italian fascists and the Nazis. Like those of the Nazis *Croix de Feu* parades were designed mainly to overawe opponents and to win converts by presenting the league as the only force capable of defeating the left. The *Croix de Feu* differed from the Nazis partly in degree, for the French movement was clearly less violent, and did not make a cult of violence for its own sake. The idea of mass mobilizations was borrowed from Mussolini, but whereas the *squadristi* were prepared to evict left wing local governments, the *Croix de Feu* stopped short of actually investing town halls.

So *Croix de Feu* violence was not designed to overthrow the state. Yet neither did the league have a strategy for the winning of power by constitutional means, for it condemned as futile both participation in elections and the idea of a conservative majority. Given La Rocque's "H-Hour" rhetoric there can hardly be any doubt that members expected the movement to win power. Many must have believed that a communist coup would provide the pretext for a *Croix de Feu* government. The leaders probably hoped that if the social and political situation deteriorated sufficiently then the La Rocque would be called upon to form a government of "public safety". His movement would merely need to demonstrate its efficacy as a unifying force and potential government. Paramilitary manoeuvres were one means of doing this.²²³

So were the *Croix de Feu* fascist? The example of the Rhône eliminates certain interpretations. The *Croix de Feu* did not aim merely at a reformed democracy with a strengthened executive, for neither their constitutional nor their social ideas were democratic. Neither can the *Croix de Feu* be seen as a dictatorship of the

²²⁰ *Nouvelliste* 11-5-1936.

²²¹ The argument which follows owes much to R. Bessel, *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism*, London, 1984.

²²² See Louis Marshal's declaration that the *Croix de Feu* represented the force against which a revolutionary assault would break (page 276).

²²³ La Rocque's replies to the committee investigating the events of 6th February support this interpretation.

“traditional” ruling class, for the league contained a real “anti-establishment” and anti-capitalist strand. This feature of the *Croix de Feu* also rules out the view of Robert Soucy that the *Croix de Feu* pursued conservative goals through violence, as it does the view of the Communist Party that the *Croix de Feu* were merely an instrument of monopoly capital. William Irvine is correct to see the *Croix de Feu* as inaugurating a new style of politics, but this is only part of the story.

In 1934 and 1935 many varieties of conservative called for reassertion of the primacy of the national interest, strengthening of the executive and limitations on the reach of the elective principle. Where the *Croix de Feu* differed was in that their solution was a radical one. It was based on a mobilization of rank and file conservatives through a mass movement which arrogated to itself the task of cleansing the nation and restoring its unity. The league implicitly challenged the state’s monopoly of violence in order to restore order and was a political and social threat to the establishment. The radicalism of the *Croix de Feu* was, however, contained within the limits of its origins as a conservative revolt. In short, the *Croix de Feu* differ from constitutional and authoritarian conservatism in their combination of radicalism and reaction, mass politics and violence. In terms of the definition used in this chapter the *Croix de Feu* were fascist, even if they were more moderate than Italian and German movements.

Whether the *Croix de Feu* were fascist or not, we still have to explain why the league failed to win power. The most common explanation, the lesser depth of the crisis in France is not sufficient. Indeed, it is arguable that in June 1936 the French bourgeoisie experienced a threat at least equal to that in Italy in 1918 to 1921 or in Germany after 1928. More interesting is René Rémond’s suggestion that fascism could not implant itself in France because of the strength of its democratic tradition, especially that of the lower middle class embodied in the Radical party. The right too, Rémond argues, was relatively impermeable to fascism, for it was divided between a traditionalist wing which looked back to the *ancien régime*, and a liberal-Orleanist wing which had long since accepted democracy.²²⁴

This argument is not acceptable without qualification. One could object that just as France has a stronger tradition of democracy than Germany, so it also has a longer history of radical rightism. Our study has shown the mutability of such traditions. We have seen how the “traditionalist” wing of conservatism adapted itself to the modern world and how it contributed to the development of a radical right, thereby transforming itself in the process. We have also seen how corporatism and authoritarianism emerged from the collapse of the Orleanist tradition of the Lyonnais

²²⁴ Rémond, *Les Droites en France*, pp. 222-223. Having experimented with many forms of government the French were, he argues, cured of the temptation to follow political adventurers. It should be noted that Rémond uses this argument to explain two things which must be kept separate. First, to explain why leagues (which Rémond does not believe to be fascist) did not win power. Second, why fascism could not take root in France.

bourgeoisie,²²⁵ and that some pro-Radical small businessmen were turning towards anti-parliamentarianism.

Neither does R. Rémond leave any room for the fact that in concrete historical circumstances individuals may have at least a partial understanding of the ideological traditions which surround them. On this basis they are sometimes able to make deliberate use of them. This was precisely what the Popular Front did. In France the reaction of the left to the threat of fascism was fundamentally different to that of its counterparts in Germany and Italy. The Popular Front developed a three part anti-fascist strategy which effectively reduced the room for manoeuvre of the far right.²²⁶ It comprised action on the streets, material demands and exploitation of the democratic tradition. Detailed analysis of anti-fascist strategy is outside the scope of this study. But the most important components were as follows.

Let us look first at street politics. In the Rhône the events of 6th February inaugurated a period of regular demonstrations and often violent clashes between left and right. Already in the summer of 1934 the Lyon police were warning the Interior Ministry of "a certain anxiety" amongst the population caused by "les réunions et manifestations qui ont eu lieu dans toute la France depuis le début de l'année et au cours desquelles des violences ont été exercées de part et d'autre".²²⁷ In 1934 and 1935 firearms were used on at least nine occasions, there were two deaths, and a number of serious injuries. Many of these were chance encounters, for example between groups of paper sellers.²²⁸

What is most interesting, however, is that whilst during the 6th February crisis an AF militant had been able to boast that "the streets belong to us",²²⁹ the initiative was very quickly lost to the left. After February the conservative press is full of complaints that meetings of the far right were being consistently troubled by anti-fascists, "dans des conditions qui font de chaque manifestation une émeute sanglante".²³⁰ In March the AF cancelled a meeting in the 6th arrondissement after receiving threats from the left.²³¹ At about this time the JP and AF were reportedly holding talks with

225 Orleanists had, of course, sponsored Boulanger.

226 It is arguable that the tactics of anti-fascists in Britain were instrumental in causing the decline of the BUF, though it had in any case presented much less of a threat than the French extreme right. See R. Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley*, London, 1975, p. 386 for his interpretation of the consequences of the disturbances at Olympia.

227 AN F⁷ 13 028, 3-7-1934. In October 1934 Herriot wrote to the Prefect to protest at the "intolerable incidents" which had occurred in several campaign meetings for the local elections (*Nouvelliste*, 3-10-1934).

228 *Nouvelliste*, 10-6-34: on 9th June 1934, for example, several police charges were needed to disperse a crowd on Place Bellecour. Headline: "Assez de bagarres - rue République". See also *La République lyonnaise*, 16-6-1934. Something of the atmosphere can be gauged from a published threat from the JP: "nous tenons à renouveler aux bandes socialo-communistes que dans le cas où un crime serait commis sur un JP, nous n'hésiterons à abattre comme des chiens les responsables" (*L'Alerte*, April, 1935).

229 *La République lyonnaise*, 20-1-1934.

230 *La République lyonnaise*, 14-7-1934. Similarly, Auguste Allaix in *L'Alerte*, September 1934: "les partis nationaux sont maîtres de la rue et n'attendent que le moment propice pour s'emparer des leviers de commande et mettre France en pillage".

231 *Lyon républicain*, 8-3-1934, *République lyonnaise*, 10-3-1934. Several militants turned up anyway, and inevitably fighting broke out. Revolver shots were fired and a *Camelot* well-known to the police was injured by a bullet in the shoulder.

the *Croix de Feu* and certain veterans' groups with a view to organizing protection for their meetings.²³²

The most spectacular confirmation of the new balance of forces was provided by a meeting held in a hall off Place Carnot on 20th June 1934. The purpose was to seal the recent formation of the *Front national*, so security was provided jointly by the JP, AF and SF. Jean Renaud, national leader of *Solidarité française*, was to be the main attraction.²³³ Hundreds of invitations were distributed.²³⁴ Meanwhile anti-fascists, largely by means of graffiti in working class districts, called for a counter-demonstration.²³⁵ The meeting was a disaster. Jean Renaud could not hide his displeasure on finding that only 200 had turned out to hear him, but he thanked those who had not been "too frightened" to come.²³⁶ Outside a crowd of 6-700 fought a pitched battle with the police. A communist died some days later of his wounds. At the end of the meeting Renaud's audience had to exit under police cover, hiding their insignia out of fear of the communists.²³⁷

Not only did this fiasco ensure that *Solidarité française* would make no mark upon Lyonnais politics. It was also a major defeat for the AF and JP. After this date neither league appears to have come into direct contact with the communists except when selling newspapers, or when their members were beaten up by the them.²³⁸ The only exception was a private war between AF and Gaston Bergery's *Front Social*.²³⁹ By the end of 1935 the AF and JP were once more reduced to seconding the parliamentary right.²⁴⁰ Meanwhile communists disrupted the meetings of the far right almost at will.²⁴¹ This pattern appears to have been repeated across France. It was the background to La Rocque's decision to hold only secret large scale meetings, and helps to explain why in conservative eyes the *Croix de Feu* became the only credible anti-communist force.

232 AN F⁷ 13 238, 13-4-1934. The results are not reported, but the *Croix de Feu* must have refused their support.

233 AN F⁷ 13 238, 19-3-1934, 5-4-1934. *Solidarité française* first showed signs of life in the Rhône at the beginning of 1934, largely as a result of the activity of Jacques Reifenrath, a member of the national leadership of SF charged with organizing the "13th region". Reifenrath had little success. An inaugural congress had to be postponed, and by March 1934 Reifenrath owed, if the police are to be believed, 50,000 francs in the region, the telephone and electricity had been cut off at his headquarters and the furniture re-possessed. Only alliance with the JP and, informally, the AF, in the *Front national* gave the league any influence.

234 Humbert Isaac refused to allow the UNC to patronise the meeting. Prost, op. cit., vol 2, p. 165.

235 AN F⁷ 13 238, 18-6-1934.

236 AN F⁷ 13 238, 22-6-1934. He then launched into a violent diatribe in which he urged his audience to "unmask a Freemason each day, and to point them out in the street as if afflicted by a contagious disease". The speech was punctuated by cries of "death to the Freemasons!"

237 AN F⁷ 13 238, 22-6-1934, 25-6-1934. Jean Renaud sent a telegram to the Minister of the Interior complaining that he had received insufficient protection from the police.

238 For example, Johnny Berlioz of the JP was beaten up by communists on the day of the 1935 Joan of Arc parade as he went to get the league's flag from the boot of his car.

239 AN F⁷ 13 028, 30-6-1934, *Nouvelliste*, 28-6-31. In June 1934 an AF member was killed in a gun battle which followed a royalist attempt to seize the *Front social's* newspaper, *La Flèche*. AF was also able to mount an attack on the relatively soft target represented by a Marc Sangnier meeting in favour of international co-operation (*Nouvelliste*, 15-3-1935).

240 Both leagues took up Victor Perret's cause against Laurent Bonnevey

241 The communists were even active in disrupting league meetings in the countryside. For example the JP suffered counter-demonstrations at Arbresle in May 1935 and at Champagne au Mont d'Or in July 1935. The former led to a quite a serious incident.

But by late 1935 it was apparent that these tactics too were counter-productive. In September the *Croix de Feu* had begun a series of large scale paramilitary manoeuvres, thereby contributing to a serious rise in political tension. In October the national press was full of rumours of a *coup d'état*. On 16th November there were serious clashes between anti-fascists and the *Croix de Feu* in Limoges.²⁴² The situation was calmed only when a *Croix de Feu* deputy, Jean Ybarnegaray, offered the disarming of all leagues, thereby avoiding the withdrawal of Radical support from the Laval government.

Pierre Milza sees this as evidence of *Croix de Feu* subservience to the parliamentary right.²⁴³ It is true that from this date the *Croix de Feu* became less combative. Large scale motorcades were abandoned after 5th December, until they were resumed by the PSF. La Rocque himself, having arrived unannounced in Lyon on December 20th, declared that those who had joined the *Croix de Feu* in search of violence or adventure would be eliminated.²⁴⁴

But this change of tactics was forced upon the league. Even after this date the *Croix de Feu* retained its sceptical attitude to constitutional methods. There is no evidence, contrary to what some historians have claimed, that La Rocque was now planning to transform the *Croix de Feu* into a parliamentary party.²⁴⁵ More important was the left's reaction.²⁴⁶ On December 2nd Rhône anti-fascists declared a "levée en masse". Mayors of left wing communes warned of an imminent coup. In Tarare preparations were made to block communications between Lyon and Paris. The town hall of Villeurbanne was protected by the hoses of the municipal fire brigade. One rural commune was reported to have blocked its main street with a cart.²⁴⁷ The Lyonais *Croix de Feu* responded tamely with a poster which proclaimed "Le mouvement Croix de Feu n'est pas générateur de désordre. Il ne veut provoquer personne".²⁴⁸

To Radical voters, however, the *Croix de Feu* appeared in a rather different light. Given that in the Rhône, at least, communist disruption of right wing meetings was far more frequent than the reverse, it is perhaps surprising that Radicals should almost universally demand dissolution of the leagues, not of the Communist Party.²⁴⁹ Further research would be needed to explain why this was. But one reason is that anti-fascists were able to present themselves as defenders of order against subversive

242 Typically, the immediate cause of this riot was an anti-fascist counter-demonstration outside a *Croix de Feu* meeting. See J. Dixon, "Limoges under Vichy", M. Phil. thesis, Warwick, 1987.

243 Milza, op. cit., p. 139.

244 *Nouveau Journal*, 20-12-1935.

245 On the contrary, the only evidence we have suggests the opposite. See footnote (?).

246 The obvious falsity of the belief that the *Croix de Feu* were planning to seize power is immaterial. On the other hand some of the accusations, for example that the *Croix de Feu* were planning to rehearse the "neutralization" of the Town Hall of Villeurbanne, have an air of credibility. This type of manoeuvre had been carried out in the past. Moreover, *Lyon républicain's* information on the league had often turned out to be correct in the past.

247 *Lyon républicain*, 1st-4th December, 1935.

248 *Nouveau Journal*, 3-12-1935.

249 On the attitude of Herriot and the Radicals to the leagues see Bernstein, op. cit., vol 2, pp. 392-3.

leagues. Clearly the events of 6th February themselves were grist to the anti-fascist propaganda mill. The French left, unlike its German and Italian counterparts, was able to do this because it subordinated the vocabulary of revolution to that of republican defence, thereby undermining the credibility of the *Croix de Feu* as a force able to restore order. This in turn permitted the Popular Front to transcend the sectionalism of politics in the early 1930s. The German and Italian mistake of focussing on class issues was not repeated.

The call for a “levée en masse” undermined for an audience sensitive to the Jacobin tradition the claim of the *Croix de Feu* to represent the nation. Similarly *Lyon républicain*’s comparison of Rouillon, regional delegate of the *Croix de Feu*, to Déroulède, who had “appeared before the High Court for much less” exploited Radical opposition to personal power. Most important, perhaps, the left insisted on the manipulation of the *Croix de Feu* by big capital. This again was presented in terms of Republican opposition to “financial feudalisms”. The “200 families” slogan had the triple advantage of connecting with this Republican view of aristocratic capital, of exploiting the tendency of petty bourgeois movements to personalise their enemies, and of permitting the inclusion in the Popular Front of “good capitalists”.

The third component of Popular Front strategy, on which there is no need to insist, was its attention to the material needs of the lower middle class. As well as the inherent attractiveness of, for example, a comprehensive grain policy, this tended to reinforce claims that the *Croix de Feu* were subservient to monopoly capital.

The total effect of the Popular Front’s propaganda was to undermine the *Croix de Feu*’s ability to combine defence of order with opposition to the political and economic establishment, a delicate balance at the best of times. Instead, in Radical eyes the *Croix de Feu* appeared to be a subversive movement in the pay of monopoly capital. The effectiveness of Popular Front strategy is not just visible in the sphere of politics proper. In the previous chapter we saw how the turn to the right of pro-Radical small-businessmen was contained, if not reversed, in 1934 and 1935. Similarly, we saw how the CFTC were attracted by the material demands of the Popular Front. Even some sections of business saw the forty hour week as a means of limiting over-production.

As for the *Croix de Feu*, they succeeded better than the parliamentary right in presenting themselves as independent from sectional interests. Where the Federation addressed its audience as property owners, and often openly defended the interests of a section of the ruling class, the *Croix de Feu* spoke only of Frenchmen, avoided the old quarrel over religion, and avoided detailed pronouncements on policy. This was sufficient to win over many Federation supporters, as well as some supporters of the centre right, especially sensitive to the appeal of “reconciliation”. But the vocabulary

of the *Croix de Feu* tended to reinforce the Popular Front's picture of the league as a new edition of the counter-revolution.

The leagues, and perhaps also fascism, failed to come to power in France partly because of the actions of the left. It must not, however, be forgotten that the left operated in more favourable circumstances in France. Working class unity alone could not have prevented the rise of fascism in Germany or Italy. The absence of mass unemployment in France made it easier to use the strike weapon for political purposes. The Republican-democratic tradition itself helps to explain the readiness with which the left embraced the Popular Front in the first place. Through the Radical press the anti-fascists had privileged access to the lower middle class. It is important too that the police, in Lyon at least, saw themselves as part of this democratic tradition. The far right often complained of being placed on an equal footing with the communists. In Lyon, at least, state and fascist violence did not reinforce each other as they did elsewhere.

One last reason for the failure of the *Croix de Feu* is that they did not win the backing of either the political or the economic establishment. There was no marriage of the authoritarianism of the elites with the radical conservatism of the *Croix de Feu*. On the national level figures like de Wendel and Mercier were interested by the league. But worried by its radicalism. They never considered La Rocque as anything other than a last resort.²⁵⁰ In the Rhône leaders of the "constitutional" right such as Victor Perret and business leaders like Henry Morel-Journal were certainly disenchanted with parliamentary democracy. Big business as a whole in the Rhône had become somewhat detached from political parties in the early 1930s. Yet beyond probable contributions to *Croix de Feu* coffers there is little evidence of backing for the *Croix de Feu*.²⁵¹ The *Croix de Feu* would be turned to only when there was no alternative. In France, although a very serious political and social crisis did develop, the unity of the left together with the reliability of the police, made a break with the existing regime a very risky proposition.

To sum up, the *Croix de Feu* can be seen firstly in the context of local politics as the consequence of the disintegration of the liberal-silk hegemony. We can see in the *Croix de Feu* a version of the democratic corporatism of the engineering industry in the late 1920s (minus the largest firms) adapted to new conditions, together with elements of the social Catholic movement. This new alliance was cemented by corporatism, anti-communism anti-capitalism, and authoritarianism. This re-emphasized the

250 AN F⁷ 13 241, 20-7-1935. On de Wendel and the leagues see Jeanneney, *De Wendel*, p. 705, where it is argued that de Wendel always had two irons in the fire, financing various leagues, but devoting the bulk of his efforts to the *Fédération républicaine*. De Wendel, in AN F⁷ 12 900, 4-7-1935, is said to have aided the *Croix de Feu* out of fear of the left, but was doubtful whether La Rocque was capable of resolving the problems that would arise once a dictatorial regime had been established. His aim was to replace La Rocque once he had won power with someone enjoying the respect of the army and possessing greater prestige in the country.

251 The left claimed that such firms as Gillet were financing the *Croix de Feu*. Given that the Gillet and other big firms were at this time financing the *Françistes*, this might well be correct.

extent to which the Federation had become the party of the Catholic, liberal and silk establishment.

It has also been argued that the *Croix de Feu* were a fascist movement. Their fascism was, however, relatively moderate. This is to be explained to a considerable extent by the circumstances in which the league operated. Whereas in Germany and Italy fascists had been able to count on the support of police, army and many parliamentary conservatives, and faced a deeply divided left, this was not the case in France. The league had been obliged to adopt a semi-clandestine posture at the end of 1934, to retreat further in December 1935, and then in June 1936 the league tamely accepted dissolution by a communist backed government.

Chapter ten

Bourgeois society and the Popular Front

“Nous commençons à nous apercevoir que les promesses démagogiques de M. Léon Blum dans son journal et les promesses plus larges encore publiées dans «l'Humanité» ont fait croire à certains ouvriers que le grand soir est proche”.¹ So commented the *Nouvelliste* on the industrial action at Renault at the end of May. Yet even a newspaper as ready to prophesy doom as the *Nouvelliste* could hardly have foreseen the massive wave of factory occupations which began in Paris on 2 June, which quickly spread to the provinces and which were not even calmed by the concessions of a frightened patronat at the Hôtel Matignon during the night of 7 and 8 June.²

In the Rhône, there were hardly any strikes at all until after the signature of the Matignon accords.³ This is not the place to examine in detail the strikes which began in earnest on 8 and 9 June in large metallurgical firms such as Berliet. Suffice it to note that an agreement to respect the Matignon accords signed by employers and unions in the presence of the Prefect on 10 June had little impact. Strikes soon spread to the whole of the department and affected most sectors, from silk weaving to large cafés and department stores. The peak of the strike wave came on 25 June, a day on which there were perhaps 35,000 on strike. By the end of the month the movement had more or less subsided. The two most bitter disputes, in the Gillet factories and the building industry, ended in triumph for the workers in early July. Building employers had to give in after 3,000 workers invaded their headquarters.⁴ According to the administration's figures some 70,851 workers had been involved in strikes in Lyon and the suburbs by 13 July.⁵ This represents about half of the workers and employees in the agglomeration.

Historians, blessed with the gift of hindsight, have generally dismissed the idea that France was on the brink of Revolution in June 1936. They are doubtless correct to do so. But this does not mean that it is necessary to agree with Antoine Prost that the strikes were merely a collective celebration.⁶ The most recent interpretations, those of Jean Kergoat and Julian Jackson, are more nuanced.⁷ They agree that although the workers were not always clear about what they wanted, the strikes did raise the issue of power relations within the enterprise and that the workers were con-

1 *Nouvelliste*, 28-5-1936.

2 The best recent accounts are J. Jackson, *The Popular Front in France*, Cambridge, 1988, and J. Kergoat, *La France du Front populaire*, Paris, 1986.

3 The following brief account of the strikes of June 1936 in the Rhône is compiled from the press and from the accounts of the *Procureur de la république* (AN BB¹⁸ especially 3010).

4 BB¹⁸ 3010, 27-7-1936.

5 BB¹⁸ 3010, 31-7-1937.

6 A. Prost, “Les grèves de juin 36: essai d'interprétation”, in R. Rémond (ed.), *Léon Blum. chef de gouvernement*.

7 Kergoat, op. cit., ch. 5.

scious of this. So too were employers in the Rhône, for one of the chief preoccupations of the Chamber of Commerce in June 1936 was to secure from the government a statement of support for the principle of private property.⁸ But a challenge to *political* relations was only implied. The workers did not question the coalition with the Radicals, even though that party's opposition to occupations was well known.

Jean Kergoat goes on to suggest that some of the preconditions for revolution were present. There was a crisis of intermediate groups. We have seen how in the Rhône both white collar workers and the self-employed had become detached from conservative leadership, and were hesitating between fascism and the Popular Front. In June there was a wave of unionization on the part of middle managers and engineers, temporarily at least under the influence of the CGT.⁹ There is no need to insist on the divisions of the bourgeoisie or the paralysis of the right. Even during the strikes some employers remained favourable to the Popular Front.¹⁰

Conservatives then had good reason to believe that Revolution was possible. Furthermore, in the conservative mind revolutions were the work of ruthless minorities. So the fact that the workers themselves did not directly challenge state power was irrelevant. It was expected that the left would profit from disorder in order to stage a Bolshevik-style coup.¹¹ This is the view which emerges from a letter of Victor Perret to Louis Marin written on 17 June:

La situation à Lyon est effrayante et se complique de jour en jour. Nous sommes dans une situation vraiment révolutionnaire et tout ce que vous avez prédit se confirme une fois de plus—Mais je me demande où M. Blum veut en venir et s'il attendra les émeutes qui ne sauraient tarder pour agir.¹²

On the other hand Perret was not certain that a revolutionary situation would develop into actual revolution, for he went on to discuss tactics for the coming parliament. But there can be little doubt that Perret was conscious of a threat to the status quo.¹³

Those closest to the workers temporarily discarded the illusions of conservative propaganda. This can be seen in an exchange in the Chamber of Commerce between Philippe Rivoire and Joseph Vulloid, the latter fresh from negotiating with his workforce:

M RIVOIRE [...] voudrait connaître l'attitude de la CGT. M. VULLOID répond qu'elle est d'accord avec les patrons. Des engagements ont été pris sous l'arbitrage du Gouvernement et ils ne sont pas respectés. C'est tout la question. M RIVOIRE demandant s'il n'y a pas un syndicat communiste plus puissant que celui de la CGT, M. VULLOID précise qu'il n'y a qu'un syndi-

⁸ PVCCL, 11-6-1936. As Henry Morel-Journal put it, "Comment pouvons nous seconder les efforts du Gouvernement pour rétablir le confiance s'il laisse propager de fausses nouvelles, comme celle qui promet à la classe ouvrière la propriété prochaine des entreprises où elle travail?"

⁹ Kolboom, "Patronat et cadres"; Maurice, op. cit., passim.

¹⁰ PVCCL, 22-6-1936: P. Rivoire lamented in the Chamber of Commerce that "une importante minorité [des commerçantes] étaient résolue à ne rien faire qui puisse nuire au succès du mouvement populaire actuel qui est sensé devoir améliorer les conditions de vie des ouvriers".

¹¹ *Nouvelliste*, 30-5-1936.

¹² AN 317 AP 72, Perret to Marin, 17-6-1936. Vinen, op. cit., p. 33, quotes a similarly ambiguous attitude on the part of another Lyonnais businessman.

¹³ The same ambiguity emerges from the a letter of another Lyon industrialist written in September, in which he both expressed fears of sovietization and civil war and analysed the concrete consequences of production losses. Quoted in R. Vinen, op. cit., p. 33.

cat, qui se trouve débordé. On discute, le syndicat accepte les conclusions, mais il n'est pas suivi.¹⁴

The *Nouvelliste*, like Rivoire more distant from the factories, spoke of a "Judéo-Marxist conspiracy".¹⁵

What is more, conservatives were aware that they had lost control over events. On 12 June Morel-Journal concluded a session of the Chamber of Commerce by saying that for the moment there was little to be done except to remain in contact with the Prefect.¹⁶ Some weeks later in his diary he dreamed of a "gesture" which would reconcile patrons and workers.¹⁷ Perret merely advised readers of *Union républicaine* to keep cool heads.¹⁸ One measure of this sense of powerlessness was desire of so many conservatives to show that they had always wanted social reform. The only reservations were on the 40 hour law, but this was safe, for it was not scheduled for immediate implementation. One member of the Chamber of Commerce, Ariste Potton, passed the summer writing a novel in which he described how the crisis was resolved in quasi-miraculous fashion by a "non-political" and extra-parliamentary ministry headed by a businessman from Grenoble, who had been called upon by despairing politicians.¹⁹

In the longer term conservatives overcame their disorientation. Nevertheless, June 1936 had profound consequences both for the right and for bourgeois society in general. A complex dialectic of unity and division within the bourgeois society will be described. The threat from the left unleashed a powerful drive for unity of all those who believed they had something to lose. By 1938 there was in interest group politics a tacit alliance of large and small business with the CFTC and agricultural organizations, united in opposition to the CGT. Yet the issues which had divided conservatives before June 1936 did not disappear, and were aggravated by Popular Front legislation. The result was that cohesion in the field of industrial relations contrasted with a further deterioration in relations between the bourgeois parties.

The Decline of the Chamber of Commerce

The response of employers to the June strikes has been seen in three ways. Adrian Rossiter argues that the progressive wing of business welcomed certain of the reforms which resulted from the strikes.²⁰ They turned against the government only because it did not abide by assurances about the Forty Hour Law. Richard Vinen, in contrast,

14 PVCCCL, 11-6-1936. Edmond Weitz, also reporting from a sector which had been badly hit by the strikes stated that if it was difficult to make certain employers see sense, it was even more difficult for the CGT to persuade the "dernier manoeuvre de la dernière usine".

15 *Nouvelliste*, 14-6-1936, 22-3-1936.

16 PVCCCL, 11-6-1936.

17 *Journal d'Henry Morel-Journal*, 29-8-1936.

18 The same advice was widely repeated as the Germans approached four years later. A *Nouvelliste* editorial of 25-6-1936 advised that all that was possible was to set an example to others through one's personal demeanour.

19 Ariste Potton, *On a trouvé un chef*, Lyon, 1937. His first action was to break the CGT by appealing directly to its members in an unofficial referendum, after having confounded its leaders with the powerful common sense of his reasoning.

20 A. Rossiter, Unpublished conference paper, 1985.

contends that the employers movement did not undergo fundamental changes in the aftermath of June. The same big business clique remained in control. Its sole aim was to undo the reforms of the Popular Front.²¹ A more nuanced argument is that Ingo Kolboom, who argues that in the summer of 1936 the CGPF was transformed on the initiative of modern sectors such as the radio-electric industry. They exploited the disarray of the CGPF leadership and the discontent of small business in order to convert the CGPF from a pressure group into a protagonist in a system of institutionalized industrial relations. Modern sectors joined with conservatives in a revamped CGPF, able to play a central role in the *revanche des patrons*.²²

It is the latter view, with some qualification, which best fits the Rhône. In the late 1920s the main division within the employers' movement had been between liberal silk interests and reformists in the engineering industry, with a minority of big silk firms wavering between the two camps. The Chamber of Commerce had been controlled by the liberals, while AICA had been aligned with reformists. Both sides in this conflict were led by large firms, with family firms (as far as can be known) generally following the lead of the big firms in their sector. With the onset of the depression a larger number of big weaving, dyeing and artificial fibre firms became detached from the liberal silk camp. They moved towards a wider big business alliance based on moderate protection, corporatism and a pragmatic attitude towards labour relations. June 1936 hammered the final nail into the coffin of the liberal-silk hegemony, for the social context and legal-institutional framework within which the *patronat* operated had been transformed. The Chamber of Commerce was eclipsed by AICA, which was better adapted to the new system of industrial relations. Some representatives of big business in the silk industry resisted the new state of affairs. But their opposition was weakened by the fact that it was based on a seemingly irrelevant tradition of silk leadership and on the narrowest of sectional interests.²³ On most issues all sectors of big business were in reality in agreement. All were radically hostile to the reforms of June, though willing if necessary to adapt to them. Most were corporatist and anti-parliamentarian. The main division in the employers movement now ran between large and medium employers. The views of the latter were expressed through the Federation and PSF, rather than in the forum of interest group politics.

June 1936 undermined further the position of an already hard-pressed Chamber of Commerce. Employers were obliged to deal with workers' delegates in the factories; the law on collective contracts and later a system of conciliation and arbi-

²¹ Vinen, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

²² Kolboom, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

²³ R. Vinen is therefore half correct in his criticism of Kolboom's view that 1936 saw a victory for modern over traditional business, for in the Rhône antagonisms between AICA and the Chamber had been declining since the depression. On the other hand, June must be seen as part of a longer term transformation of patronal politics.

tration gave an important role to employers' syndicates.²⁴ This automatically removed the Chamber of Commerce from centre stage. During the strikes fears had already been expressed that businessmen were turning for advice to their syndicates rather than to the Chamber.²⁵ In the longer term it was Aimé Bernard's AICA, affiliated to the CGPF, which made the running. The *raison d'être* of AICA was the conduct of institutionalized labour relations.

In an effort to preserve its position the Chamber adhered to a plan emanating from the Parisian Chamber of Commerce for a *Comité national d'entente*. This was a joint organization of employers' organizations in which Chambers of Commerce would play a central role.²⁶ The CGPF accepted this plan as a means of providing itself with a front, thereby overcoming the discredit into which it had fallen as a result of Matignon. The committee also represented an effort to neutralize the wave of protest from small and medium firms which followed Matignon.²⁷ Although it is artificial to separate this aspect of the reorganization of the employers' movement, the mobilization of small and medium business will be dealt with in the following section. What is important here is the struggle between the Chambers and the CGPF. By the autumn the latter on the national level had lost interest in the *Comité*. Having staked its claim to leadership of the employers' movement through its opposition to a "second Matignon", it no longer needed a surrogate.²⁸

The same processes were at work in Lyon. On the one hand, Michel Delzeux, of the small business ACS, was strongly in favour of the *Comité d'entente*, seeing it as a means of fending off the danger of a new small business movement outside of his own control. On the other Henry Morel-Journal saw the *Comité d'entente* as a means to limit the influence of AICA.²⁹ This aim was apparently realized when towards the end of July 1936 the *Comité* was constituted in Lyon, for the bureau was dominated by the Chamber.³⁰ The *Comité d'entente's* first communiqué contrasted the role of the Chamber as the sole official representative of the patronat in the region, with the job of protecting sectional interests which fell to syndicates. Neither AICA nor the CGPF were mentioned.³¹

The *Comité d'entente* seems briefly to have functioned quite well. But Bernard and AICA were not prepared to play second fiddle to the Chamber. In a speech of 1

24 ADR 4m 236, 24-8-1936: The Prefect commented in August 1936 "on peut également souligner, en raison même de l'application des nouvelles lois sociales, la tendance nette de s'organiser fortement tant du côté ouvrier que du côté patronal".

25 PVCCL, 22-6-1936.

26 On the *Comité d'entente* see Kolboom, op. cit., pp. 173-236; Vinen, op. cit., pp. 38-44.

27 This would be achieved by a calculated confusion of Chambers of Commerce with small and medium firms.

28 This interpretation is derived from Ingo Kolboom.

29 PVCCL, 9-7-1936. No-one in the Chamber criticized this purpose.

30 PVCCL, 9-7-1936; CRCCCL, 1936, pp. 114-5. Two of the three bureau members were from the Chamber—Paul Charbin (president) and Renaud, who was also there as a representative of the retail trade. The secretary of the *Comité* was Aimé Bernard. Charbin, was chosen as President because of his "broad authority", meaning that he had often been seen in the past as a compromise figure in patronal conflicts.

31 CRCCCL, 1936, p. 113.

August Bernard argued that whereas the Chamber represented only local interests, and whereas syndicates expressed sectional concerns, AICA was able to combine the two roles and therefore act as interpreter of the higher interest of the motherland.³² The Chamber meanwhile publicly criticized the excessive role of the CGPF, reminding employers that its authority was recognized neither by the textile industry nor by the ACS.³³ The turning point came in November, when the CGPF in Paris presented a response to the government on the question of conciliation and arbitration without approaching the *Comité d'entente*. AICA members in the Lyon Chamber such as Edmund Weitz protested their continued commitment to the Committee.³⁴ In fact a change had clearly taken place.³⁵ Morel-Journal expressed in January the hope that the Chamber would "reprennent une position qu'elles ont—il faut bien l'admettre, perdu provisoirement".³⁶ The *Comité d'entente* became a means by which AICA transmitted its views.

The defeat of the Chamber was due to the discredit into which it had fallen before June and the fact that AICA was better equipped to deal with labour relations. Furthermore, figures like Aymé Bernard and his deputy Johannès Dupraz were professionals rather than businessmen, and so better able to pose as representatives of the general interest at a time when the patronat was still much divided.³⁷ And since AICA lacked official status it was freer to engage in propaganda activities. It was able to organize in November 1937 a large rally of the local patronat at which all sorts of veiled threats were uttered against the government.³⁸ Finally, the Chamber was perhaps slow to democratise its image because it took its own representativeness for granted. Since the strikes it had been encouraged to view itself in this way because the CGPF's right to represent the patronat at Matignon had been widely contested.

What was at stake in this conflict between the two bodies? The attitudes of the leaders of the two bodies to labour questions were more or less identical.³⁹ Certainly AICA took a more robust line in public, but this can be explained by the fact that the Chamber as an official body had to be more subtle in its pronouncements.⁴⁰ In private Chamber of Commerce members were just as severe. We shall see that both were convinced from the beginning of the need to settle accounts with the CGT, though

32 *Nouvelliste*, 2-8-1936.

33 The textile industries had withdrawn from the CGPF in protest at Matignon. It is typical of bourgeois organizations in France that the ACS should be affiliated to AICA yet not recognize the authority of the CGPF.

34 PVCCL, 26-11-1936. The UCS had always had close links to AICA, but in the past had accepted the pre-eminence of the Chamber.

35 Essentially, leaders of the UCS like Weitz and Rivoire shifted their allegiance from the Chamber to AICA.

36 PVCCL, 28-1-1937. Morel-Journal was commenting on the recognition of the CGPF as the "most representative" patronal organization, and upon a Chamber of Commerce plan to democratize itself by converting the national association of presidents into a permanent assembly.

37 This is stressed by Richard Vinen, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

38 *Nouvelliste*, 25-11-1937.

39 For example, neither organization explicitly criticized the social laws before 1938.

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both were also willing, if necessary, to adapt to reforms if they could not be overthrown.

Neither is there any clear political difference between the leadership of the two bodies. The majority in both Chamber and AICA were corporatists, and agreed that the liberal economy had had its day. In two respects they went further than before June 1936. In response to the strikes greater consideration was given to the role of labour in the corporatist system. Also, for reasons which will be dealt with later, some were now prepared to consider compulsory membership of syndicates. The Chamber officially endorsed the idea of legally backed ententes in 1936 and again in 1939.⁴¹ Henry Morel-Journal looked forward to a two stage reorganization of the patronat: first employers would learn syndical discipline, then a new order would be created in which employer and worker syndicates would collaborate in the interests of social peace.⁴² Aimé Bernard was against a generalized system of ententes, but recognized the need for greater syndical discipline in the transformation industries, and accepted that the syndicate ought to have the power to discipline recalcitrant bosses.⁴³

So what did divide AICA and the Chamber? To begin with there was a personal dimension. Henry Morel-Journal had long been opposed to the influence of AICA, Aimé Bernard and Edmond Weitz. Morel-Journal's residual dislike of Weitz—who had once caused Morel-Journal's demotion from first to second Vice-president—might well have influenced his conduct in 1936 and 1937. More important, Morel-Journal was emotionally attached to the Chamber of Commerce and was preoccupied with maintaining its prestige.⁴⁴ He was also sensitive to the traditional association of the Chamber with the silk industry, seeing himself as heir to Isaac and Aynard. It is likely therefore that he saw the rise of AICA as a defeat for the silk industry. This might seem paradoxical given that on the main issue of the day the two sides were agreed. But what was also at stake was the leadership of the patronat in the region, and the ability to influence the government on a whole range of other questions.⁴⁵

That the balance of forces had shifted against the silk industry was demonstrated by the fact that in the summer of 1938 the Chamber of Commerce itself accepted the need for reorganization. The *soierie* lost one of its eight seats, while other industries saw their representation increased from four to eight. Wholesalers gained

41 CRCCCL, 1936, p. 190; PVCCL, 10-11-1938—the debate in the latter sitting over corporatism was about the principle of corporatism, but whether or not membership should be compulsory,

42 CRCCCL, 1937, pp. 37-38.

43 *Bulletins et Documents de l'AICA*, 1-5-1939. Thanks to Richard Vinen for allowing me to see this document. My interpretation of it differs from his in that I do not agree that Bernard was systematically anti-corporatist.

44 He published a pamphlet extolling its virtues in 1937. (*Le Chambre de Commerce de Lyon: Notes pour l'usage des membres*, Lyon, 1937).

45 PVCCL, 12-11-1936: that the national textile employers federation had withdrawn from both the CGPF and the *Comité d'entente* may also have entered into Morel-Journal's calculations, for this must have weakened his bargaining power. Morel-Journal was certainly displeased at the textile industry's withdrawal from the *Comité d'entente*.

one seat, retailers saw their representation doubled to eight.⁴⁶ There was no opposition in the full sitting of the Chamber. But six months previously Henry Morel-Journal had unexpectedly resigned as President. No reason is given in his diary; in the Chamber he cryptically referred to "des raisons de principe".⁴⁷ Perhaps he could not bear to preside over the end of a great tradition.

This brings us to the political attitudes of business. The eclipse of the Chamber of Commerce was a severe blow to the liberal tradition. That both Morel-Journal and Dupraz were sympathisers of the corporatist PSF underscores the absence of a political division between AICA and Chamber.⁴⁸

In view of the discredit into which parliamentary democracy had fallen in the eyes of many businessmen since 1933, it is hardly surprising that June 1936 had done nothing to reinforce confidence in Republican institutions. Henry Morel-Journal believed that in accordance with the "law of number" the interests of employers had been sacrificed to those of the workers.⁴⁹ AICA members like Johannès Dupraz were equally distrustful of democracy. Ariste Potton, on the other hand, maintained that recovery could be achieved without breaking with existing institutions. Government would be placed in the hands of an apolitical ministry composed of technicians, but it would be dependent upon the confidence of Parliament, and would not be granted special powers. Yet his ideas too were predicated upon the elimination of the communist party and CGT through a direct appeal to the rank and file coupled with repression of its leadership.⁵⁰

Potton's ideas are illustrative of the fact that big business political strategies were open-ended. They could be seen as endorsing either the PSF or the "authoritarian republicanism" of Daladier. Even Morel-Journal was dubious about the PSF.⁵¹ His sympathy for La Rocque's party did not prevent him from attending meetings of the centrist Mascaraud committee in 1937 and 1938, or from welcoming the Daladier Government in 1938.⁵² Indeed, Morel-Journal was an acquaintance of Daladier's Finance Minister Marchandeau, with whom he collaborated in his work of recovery.⁵³ Big business still possessed means of influencing the executive through its

46 PVCCL, 6-10-1938. The reform was decreed by the ministry in August 1939, and would have been the basis of that year's elections.

47 PVCCL, 23-12-1937.

48 Potton, *On a trouvé un chef*, passim.

49 PVCCL, 11-6-1936: "C'est Renan je crois qui a dit que l'évidence elle-même est impuissante en face d'une mystique populaire. Où cela va-t-il nous conduire?... Ici où nous avons la charge de défendre le commerce et l'industrie, nous nous demandons si les patrons et leurs droits ne sont pas sacrifiés d'avance aux ouvriers, plus nombreux qu'eux, aux nom de la loi du nombre dont s'inspire volontiers les démocrates".

50 Potton, *On a trouvé un chef*, passim, and A Potton and J. Comparat, *La révolution qu'il faut faire*, Lyon, 1938.

51 Morel-Journal doubted the party's ability to transcend the left right division. "Le PSF peut gagner du terrain, mais surtout sur le parti modéré, car pour le masse il est le «fascisme». Fascisme, mot précieux qui est mis à toutes les sauces et désigne ceux qui ne pensent pas comme vous".

52 *Journal d'Henry Morel-Journal*, 11-4-1938: as "le meilleure que l'on pouvait souhaiter avec la composition présente de la Chambre".

53 *Journal d'Henry Morel-Journal*, 26-8-1936.

contacts with politicians operating on the margins of Radicalism and in the centre right. The same flexibility characterized its attitude to social reform.

Other businessmen possessed neither the political weight nor the economic margin for manoeuvre available to big firms. The important divisions within the patronat were now between large, medium and small business, rather than between engineering and the silk industry or between reformists and conservatives. These conflicts were to be seen more in party than in interest group politics.

Small business and the Popular Front

For Ingo Kolboom the reorganization of the patronat in the second half of 1936 was due partly to the pressure of small and medium business, outraged by the "Matignon dictat". In accordance with his view that nothing really changed in June 1936, Richard Vinen denies that small and medium concerns were especially outraged by Matignon or the strikes. The discontent of small business was, he argues, an illusion created by big business for its own purposes. Those who claimed to speak for small and medium business represented in reality no-one.⁵⁴ The small business movement is of obvious importance in understanding the development of conservative politics after June 1936, for the PSF presented itself as an expression of the *classes moyennes*, and of their hostility both to the CGT and those responsible for the capitulation of 7-8 June.

Both the ACS and its radical rival the UF were real movements, able on occasion to mobilize substantial support amongst retailers. Certainly many of their demands were quite acceptable to business in general. The ACS enjoyed a close relationship with big business. But we have seen that big business was often worried by the challenge from retailers.⁵⁵ After June 1936 the relationship between big and small business became more complex still. On the one hand, there was a greater willingness to set aside sectional conflict in the interest of unity against the left. Yet on the other, thanks to the reforms of the Popular Front, the reasons for conflict were if anything greater, whilst conscious opposition to big business was extended from small shopkeepers to capitalist family firms. Already in the first months of 1936 the Chamber had opposed a plan to modernize the national organization of the Chambers of Commerce on the grounds that it would give too much power to small chambers. This suggests the beginnings of a mobilization of medium firms.⁵⁶

There is much evidence of discontent on the part of small business in the Rhône after June 1936. In branches as diverse as engineering and the drinks trade there were challenges from those claiming to represent small business.⁵⁷ It is perhaps

⁵⁴ Kolboom, op. cit., especially Chapters 3 and 5; Vinen, op. cit., especially pp. 51-2.

⁵⁵ See Chapter 4.

⁵⁶ PVCCL, 14-5-1936. In early 1936 the Chamber was also manoeuvring against the new *Chambre des métiers*, seen as a threat to the institutional hegemony of the Chamber, and to the Chamber's control over apprenticeship.

⁵⁷ *Nouvelliste*, 20-3-1937, 24-6-1938.

surprising therefore to find that in spite of this there was scarcely any autonomous public activity on the part of small business. On the contrary, in the midst of the strikes the press announced the formation of a *Cartel du Commerce*, grouping various small business groups such as the ACS and UF, together with AICA and the UCS representing big business.⁵⁸ In the spring of 1937 retailers were in the forefront of agitation against the forty hour week. For obvious reasons this campaign was viewed favourably by business in general. There was no repeat of the conflicts of 1933.⁵⁹ So it is not surprising to find that a huge meeting at the Palais de la foire held to protest against the introduction of the forty hour week into the retail trade was patronized by the whole range of business associations, large and small. Henry Morel-Journal was amongst the speakers. For the UF Perroud admitted that many might be astonished to see his organization united with the "grand patronat" in the form of AICA, but in present circumstances there was no choice.⁶⁰

Furthermore, with time big business seems to have realized that it could afford to ignore the grievances of small business. The *Cartel du commerce* had marked its formation in June 1936 by issuing a series of demands which it asked the Chamber of Commerce to transmit to the government. These included several points unacceptable to big business.⁶¹ Some wished to balance the Cartel's text with a qualifying letter. Morel-Journal argued that the Chamber ought in current circumstances to demonstrate its concern for retailers. The solution adopted was to send the demands to the government, but without explicitly endorsing them.⁶²

This was almost the only case where big business made concessions on such issues to small business. In the following months attention was focussed upon the relatively peripheral question of purchasing cooperatives run by large firms. The willingness of employers to suppress them became a symbol of collaboration between big and small business. But even here employers dragged their feet.⁶³ In the spring of 1937 Delzeux complained that the CGPF did not expend sufficient energy in the defence of small business.⁶⁴ Such complaints were reiterated *ad nauseam* in the press. Nevertheless, small business organizations never broke openly with big business. There were no repeats of the UF campaigns of 1933 and 1935.

The reason for this is quite prosaic. Small business accepted that the main priority was defeat of the labour movement. As Delzeux put it, "les français sont divisés en deux clans: les ouvriers qui n'ont rien à perdre et qui feront tout leur possible pour

⁵⁸ *Nouvelliste*, 25-6-1936.

⁵⁹ See Chapter 8, page 299.

⁶⁰ *Nouvelliste*, 14-5-1937.

⁶¹ Such as the replacement of the turnover tax with production tax and state surveillance of wholesale prices.

⁶² *PVCCL*, 25-6-1936.

⁶³ *PVCCL*, 1-10-1936. Representatives of the silk and metal industries claimed to support the idea in principle, but fearful of rising food prices, thought up all sorts of obstacles.

⁶⁴ *PVCCL*, 15-4-1937.

gagner davantage, et ceux qui ont une boutique et voudraient bien la conserver".⁶⁵ Small business leaders were well aware that if the CGT were to be defeated then big business would have to take the lead, for it was only in big enterprises that the unions could be defeated. AICA and the Chamber cleverly exploited this weakness. As Ingo Kolboom argues, the key was the emphasis on unity of the "patronat", which united capitalists and petty producers, and made it possible to present attacks on big business as part of a Marxist conspiracy to divide the patronat.⁶⁶

The imperatives of the struggle of against the CGT did not, however, remove the causes of discord between large and small business. Indeed, in some respects they were aggravated by the labour legislation of the Popular Front. One problem was that whilst business large and small agreed on the need for a show-down with the CGT, big business possessed the leeway necessary to simultaneously pursue a policy of adaptation.

Richard Vinen disputes the view that small business had any special reason to take a stronger line against the strikes of June 1936. Certainly many small businesses had escaped strike action. Probably about half of all wage earners in the agglomeration were involved in the strikes. From partial statistics in judicial archives it can be seen that most worked in medium and large enterprises, employing somewhere between thirty and 300 workers. Only in the building industry were smaller firms widely affected.⁶⁷ Yet if many small businesses escaped the strikes themselves, it was much harder for them to avoid their consequences. Unionization extended well beyond those firms where strikes had taken place.⁶⁸ Above, all the intervention of the state meant that apart from very small firms, especially in remote areas, few could avoid wage rises or the forty hour week. It is not surprising that small shopkeepers who were obliged to grant concessions to their workers because of strikes in large firms saw Matignon as an injustice.

What is more, they had some reason to be suspicious of big business. Certainly the latter would have preferred the suppression of Popular Front legislation.⁶⁹ Indeed, before June many would have liked to undo the forty-eight hour and social insurance legislation too. Yet at the same time, the attitude of big business to social insurance and the story of the entente in the silk industry shows that many large firms,

⁶⁵ PVCCCL, 22-6-1936.

⁶⁶ For example the views of engineering employers in *Nouvelliste*, 8-12-1937; CRCCL, 25-7-1938. See also Kolboom, *op. cit.*, pp. 263-288.

⁶⁷ BB¹⁸ 3010. We do not know the total number of strikes, so it is impossible to calculate the average size of enterprise affected. But we do know that there were 509 occupations, which means that the average of occupied firm must have employed well over 100 workers. Even the occupation of Berliet with its 5,000 employees does not much distort the average, since establishments of this size were rare.

⁶⁸ This is clear from Antoine Prost's study of the CGT, which shows that 98% of the "syndicalisable" workforce was unionized. His figures are dubious, but not sufficiently so to reject the view of very wide unionization.

⁶⁹ There is no reason to doubt the honesty of Henry Morel-Journel's defence of Matignon: "A un moment de désarroi, devant le spectre de la révolution qu'on agitaient devant eux, ils ont du prendre sans délai leurs responsabilités" (CRCCL, 4-2-1937). This is to agree with the assessment of Richard Vinen, *op. cit.* p. 37: "The Matignon accords were signed, not because certain industries found them acceptable, but because certain industries viewed the consequences of *not* signing the accords as unacceptable".

especially in modern sectors, were prepared to risk compromise with the left if there was no other way of gaining their ends. The same ambiguity applies to Popular Front legislation. Some employers were more willing and able than others to adapt to the new situation. Given that big business had been unable to do away with the Eight Hour Law or any other major piece of social legislation, there was good reason to adopt a flexible approach.

Hence the attitude of employers to collective contracts. Those who had been interested in collective wage negotiations in the late 1920s had forgotten their enthusiasm when faced with the need to compress wages. But in the new situation created by June 1936 big business accepted collective contracts as an aid in social pacification.⁷⁰ In the longer term compulsory nationwide contracts also came to be seen by the silk, engineering and building industries as a means of ensuring that rivals did not gain an unfair advantage by paying lower wages or by avoiding social laws. Paul Charbin even complained of the "weakness of the CGT in some areas". Only those who did their duty, he complained, were penalized.⁷¹ In the silk industry employers got together with the CGT and CFTC in order to press for the prosecution of dissident firms.⁷²

Putting the small business point of view Michel Delzeux admitted that non-observation of contracts was a problem, but he had no desire to see greater state regulation of small business. He opposed compulsory contracts on the grounds that the real problem was "travail noir" and competition from foreign artisans.⁷³ Once the CGT had been defeated in the General Strike of November 1938 Delzeux and the ACS, unlike the UCS, rejected the idea of collective contracts altogether.⁷⁴ There was then an intensification of a long struggle on the part of big firms to eliminate what they saw as unfair competition from small business. As in the conflict over the silk entente, big business was prepared to enlist the aid of the CGT to achieve its ends.

There are other examples of big business flexibility. In January 1937 Henry Morel-Journal argued "nous ne perdrons pas notre temps à boudier des lois qui ont été votées. Nous n'avons pas autre chose à faire que d'y adapter le mieux possible nos entreprises."⁷⁵ As late as February 1938 the Chamber gave a guarded welcome to Prime Minister Chautemps's *Statut Moderne du travail*. The main purpose of this bill was to discipline the trades unions. But it included propositions which would have horrified employers before June 1936. Employers were particularly interested in compulsory and binding arbitration. True, it has been shown that employers were beginning to learn how to make use of the arbitration system for their own ends, but in February

⁷⁰ PVCCL, 22-6-1936.

⁷¹ PVCCL, 25-2-1937.

⁷² *Voix sociale*, 25-12-1937, 14-5-1938, 11-6-1938, 9-10-1938.

⁷³ PVCCL, 25-2-1937.

⁷⁴ *Voix sociale*, 4-2-1939.

⁷⁵ PVCCL, 1-4-1937. This advice was also published in CRCCL.

1938 decisions were still being rendered which employers disliked. Institutionalized industrial relations made it possible for workers to express grievances, and sometimes gain satisfaction, which simply would not previously have seen the light of day, without even having to strike.⁷⁶ In one case, large and small business fell out over labour relations, with the ACS claiming that the willingness of UCS to agree wage rises for employees in department stores had forced small retailers to do the same.⁷⁷ These examples have to be placed alongside the fact that big business was simultaneously doing all it could to undermine the CGT. The point however is that those who accused big business of joining with the CGT in a conspiracy against small property had some basis for their suspicions.

All the tensions which had caused small business movements in 1933 and 1934 to flirt with the extreme right persisted. The PSF directed much of its propaganda towards small business and especially small shopkeepers. The PSF militant Marcel Perdriel continued to play a part in the UF. In September 1936 he was reported to have joined with two royalists in organizing a system whereby shopkeepers would be rapidly mobilized in the event of a new outbreak of strikes.⁷⁸ Yet in general organizations representing small business remained faithful to the political centre. Alfred Elmigar, the UF's new Deputy, sat with the moderate right in the Chamber, where he made something of a fetish of parliamentarianism.⁷⁹ Veuilleux, President of the drinks trade association, publicly endorsed Herriot's candidature in the *cantonales* of 1937.⁸⁰ We shall see in the following chapter that the PSF had only marginal success in its efforts to win over the Radical electorate.

Where the PSF was more successful, however, was in latching onto the discontent of small and medium *capitalist* firms. Such firms had been directly affected by strike action, were less able than big business to adapt to the new situation, and therefore their bosses echoed some of the themes of small business. Firms of this type were probably at the origin of organizations like the *Syndicat de la petite métallurgie*.⁸¹ But no body exclusively devoted to the interests of such firms emerged. Without a tradition of separate organization, and conscious of the need for a united front of the patronat, the discontent of family firms tended to be expressed, as we shall see, through political parties, especially the PSF.

76 For the Chamber's attitude to the *Statut moderne* see PVCCL, 24-2-1938. Proposals for union involvement in questions of hiring and firing were rejected.

77 PVCCL, 25-2-1937. On another occasion large and small business fell out in the Chamber over the attitude to be taken towards its own employees at the Port Rambaud. Delzeux even balked at the cost of installing showers for the workers, arguing that a simple wooden structure with three or four showers would be sufficient. Others regarded this kind of penny-pinching as a slur on the honour of the Chamber.

78 ADR 4m 244, September, 1936.

79 For example he joined the communists in opposing the vote of full powers to Daladier on 4-8-1937, because, he said, "j'entends rester intégralement républicain. Les pleins pouvoirs sont opposés au Credo républicain et préparent le fascisme".

80 *Nouvelliste*, 25-11-1937. Veuilleux was, according to the *Nouvelliste* taken to task for this reason by participants in the employers' rally of November 1937.

81 One leader was Dietz, a PSF departmental orator.

To sum up, small business discontent at Matignon was real enough, and briefly big business appears to have been genuinely worried by it. Yet there is no evidence that this discontent obliged big business to do anything that it would not otherwise have done. On the contrary, small business proved more compliant than it had in 1933 or 1935. But the threat from the left was insufficient to do more than displace the tensions which had divided employers before June 1936. Indeed, Popular Front labour legislation intensified certain conflicts.

The CFTC and the Popular Front

After June 1936 the CFTC expanded rapidly. Membership increased in the department by 400%. In 1938 there were between 5,000 and 10,000 female and more than 10,000 male members.⁸² The number of affiliated syndicates grew from nineteen, of which most had been inactive, to forty-eight, not including sections of national unions.⁸³

Much of this expansion was in traditional areas of strength in the centre of the agglomeration, where parishes were well structured. CFTC-metallurgy possessed in 1938 six workplace sections, all of which were in firms located in or close to the centre of the city.⁸⁴ In the textile towns of the Monts du Beaujolais, where religious practice was high, the parish system well developed, and the workforce in the textile factories mainly female, the CFTC had perhaps its greatest success of all. After June Catholic trades unions also expanded outside of such areas. There were *sections d'entreprise* in three St. Fons chemical factories.⁸⁵ CFTC white collar unions put up a reasonable showing in the Prud'homme elections in Vénissieux in 1938.

As before June 1936 most members were white collar workers.⁸⁶ Judging by the numbers of syndicates of technicians and supervisory personnel, the CFTC continued to appeal preferentially to higher grade *salariés*. Pre-1936 preponderance among the white collar workers of the silk industry was confirmed by the recognition of a CFTC dominated cartel as "most representative".⁸⁷ In the banks too the relative position of the CFTC was unchanged. The CGT won 75% of the vote in the first round of delegate elections in 1936, but the CFTC represented a substantial minority.⁸⁸

82 Launey, *La CFTC*, maps on pp. 401 and 402. The exact figures are given in the source document, but M. Launey does not reproduce them.

83 *Voix sociale*, 16-4-1938. A *Union départementale* had also been created.

84 Ets. Calor was sited in the middle of the parish of St. Sacrement, an area of PDP strength. One of the CFTC's rare victories in delegate elections was in the Gillet factory on quai Serin (4th arrondissement). Of eleven known *sections d'entreprise*, four were situated in central areas; four were close to those areas; three were in the chemical factories of St. Fons (see note 0).

85 Rhône-Poulenc, St. Gobain and Ste Bâle at St. Fons, and Ste. Electro-chimie at Pierre-Benite

86 Nationally there was a rise in the relative importance of industrial workers. Whether this happened in the Rhône is impossible to say. If there was such a rise it had few consequences for the CFTC in the Rhône.

87 *Voix sociale*, 5-3-1938: i. e. the Corporation, the *Syndicat des dames employées*, and the *Syndicat du passage Thiffaut*.

88 ADR 4m 236, 22-10-1936; *Voix Sociale*, 13-11-1937.

Before June 1936 the CFTC had been attracted by the social, but not the political, programme of the Popular Front. June intensified this contradiction. Catholic workers were urged to participate in occupations; all of the social reforms of June were approved without reservation.⁸⁹ New unions, especially in proletarian areas were often led by members of the JOC,⁹⁰ the goal of which was re-Christianization through participation in working class life and culture.⁹¹ The JOC was not left wing. On the contrary it demanded vigorous suppression of all "fauteurs de brimades" and measures such as separation of the sexes in factories.⁹² But like the JAC, the JOC were prepared to mute their Catholicism in order to collaborate on practical issues with the left.⁹³ A pointer to the future was the presence in JOC ranks in Lyon of a youthful Louis Althusser. Meanwhile there was a shift towards the left in the leadership of the CFTC. Auguste Gruffaz died in 1937. His place as president of the regional union was taken by Raoul Duclos, who was significantly further to the left. The *Corporation* itself was also transformed by the strike wave, as the small group of class collaborators was swamped by new adherents. Its new leader Pierre Tolon was a PDP member. The new leader of the departmental union of the CFTC was the metallurgist and *Jeune république* sympathiser, Louis Naillod.

Yet during the next three years the moderate centrism of the CFTC leadership matched the mood of the rank and file less and less. Perhaps the best evidence for this is that the expansion of the CFTC after June was accompanied by the collapse of the PDP, which had once been the political prolongation of Catholic trades unionism. CFTC leaders generally remained faithful to Christian democracy, or less often the Federation. But many of the rank and file turned to the PSF. There are a number of reasons for this.

Rapid expansion led to an influx of members whose commitment to social Catholicism was sometimes superficial. One CFTC writer described a multitude of "sudden and unforeseen" conversions to the principles of syndicalism, which he attributed to "the pressure of events" and the "menace of collectivization".⁹⁴ Often the main motive for joining was opposition to the CGT.⁹⁵ Anti-CGT sentiment was reinforced by the fact that Catholic trades unionists, especially in areas where the CFTC had previously been absent, were often isolated in a sea of CGT members, in an atmo-

⁸⁹ *Nouveau Journal*, 19-6-1936.

⁹⁰ *Voix sociale*, 11-12-1937. such as Clause, animator of the new metallurgy section in Villefranche.

⁹¹ Launey, *La CFTC*, pp. 315-7.

⁹² *Nouvelliste*, 30-11-1936 for the demands of the JOC.

⁹³ M. Launey, *La CFTC*, p. 333, interviewed Jean-Benoît Mayoud, a metal worker close to the JOC, who worked along these lines. J-L Pinol and M. Moissonnier, "Le Parti communiste français dans la région lyonnaise, (fin 1938—fin 1940)", *Cahiers d'Histoire*, 1985, reports that after suppression of the party in 1939 Young Communists met at the home of a sympathetic JOC member.

⁹⁴ *Nouveau Journal*, 26-2-1937. For such people the union was a necessary evil.

⁹⁵ Oral evidence gathered by M. Launey suggests that this was the most important single motive for joining the CFTC. (*La CFTC*, pp. 327-335).

sphere where there was a strong pressure to conform. The new syndicates were, moreover, not well organized.⁹⁶

It is also possible to detect a shift to the right in the old core of the CFTC. Even in normal circumstances the attitude of conservative white collar workers to trades unionism was ambiguous, seeing it as a means both of collective self-defence and of protecting individual career structures. The popularity after June of the term “collaborateur” to designate non-manual workers after 1936 is illustrative of the attitude of many. The implicit threat to the social hierarchy in June 1936 and the fact that CFTC members were disproportionately higher grade employees, led to suspicion of the CGT.

Notwithstanding Thorez's *main tendue*, many CGT militants continued to associate Catholicism with the ruses of the patronat. In the polarized atmosphere of 1936 to 1938 the CFTC's appeals for class collaboration and comprehension of the boss's point of view looked like a source of division.⁹⁷ The CGT was often reluctant to allow the CFTC a place at the negotiating table.⁹⁸ CFTC members, often isolated in their workplaces, were vulnerable to the sort of treatment more often meted out to the SPF. Some were victims of the “conduite de Grenoble”, which involved ritual humiliation by female workers.⁹⁹ At Etablissements Visseaux (Vaise) workers struck in order to oblige six CFTC adherents to join the CGT.¹⁰⁰

The CFTC was faced with the perennial problem of how to stick to its own path. Given the dispersal of Christian trades unionists, the much greater numbers of the CGT, and the indiscipline of the CGT rank and file, CFTC leaders realized that if they were to play any part at all in industrial relations, then there must be a re-establishment of order in the factories. Hence insistence on the demand that the CGT respect the right of workers to join the union of their choice.¹⁰¹ The CFTC also saw index linking of wages as a means of avoiding strikes,¹⁰² demanded the reinforcement of collective contracts and wanted a strengthening of the labour inspectorate.

Such demands brought the CFTC into a tacit alliance with the patronat. Employers usually preferred the PSF's trades union organization, the SPF, or the “independent” unions which mushroomed after June, onwards to the CFTC. Indeed, the rivalry of the SPF, which recruited in many of the same areas as the Catholics, was a factor restraining the rightwards drift of the CFTC.¹⁰³ Yet a tacit alliance did

96 Launey, op. cit., pp. 354-7. This was a problem on the national level.

97 A polemic between CGT and CFTC in the banks touched directly on this. *Voix sociale*, 25-12-1937.

98 Ironically, the CFTC was often excluded from a system of institutionalized industrial relations for which it had campaigned more or less alone. On this problem see Launey, *La CFTC*,

99 *Nouveau Journal*, 16-2-1937. See chapter twelve on the use of the conduite de Grenoble.

100 *Nouvelliste*, 17-9-1936.

101 *Voix sociale*, 1-12-1936; *Nouveau Journal*, 10-11-1936. The CFTC did not, however, extend the principle of “liberté syndicale” to the SPF, seen as insufficiently independent.

102 *Voix sociale*, 25-12-1937.

103 *Nouveau Journal*, 27-4-1937. The CFTC often joined the CGT in denouncing the patronal pressure on which these unions were said to depend, and on the grounds that the SPF were not truly independent, refused to ally with it for any reason. The *Corporation* refused an offer from the SPF of a pact: “c'est justement à cause de nos

emerge, based on the common belief that the precondition of any constructive action was to discipline the CGT.

The CFTC were also vulnerable to the ideological strategies of the patronat. Catholic trades unionists thought in terms of a divinely ordained organic hierarchy. Class conflict was only a secondary phenomenon. It would not disrupt the harmony of the profession as long as the underlying inter-dependence of things was kept in mind. Those who spoke in terms of the primacy of class conflict must therefore be bent upon the destruction of society for their own "political" and anti-religious ends. For these reasons Catholic trades unionists were ready to listen when employers claimed that they were not opposed to trades unionism as such, but only to its politicization. For similar reasons on 30 November 1938 CFTC leaders accepted the contention that strike action was unjustifiable at a time of national emergency. In other words patronal strategies exploited the contradiction between the social and the political views of the CFTC.

There is also some evidence of pressure from the Church hierarchy upon the CFTC. This was part of a nationwide reaction against progressive Catholicism.¹⁰⁴ Cardinal Maurin had always been a reluctant supporter of Christian democracy. In the midst of the strikes of June 1936 a pastoral letter reminded Catholics that they had the duty to join a trades union. Maurin reiterated the Church's condemnation of Marxist trades unions and urged workers to join the CFTC. Yet the letter implies that current events had demonstrated the failure of the CFTC, and ends by seeming to put CFTC and SPF on an equal footing.¹⁰⁵ There is no need to dwell on the fact that the SPF frequently reproached the CFTC with being a confessional union.¹⁰⁶ What is more important is that Maurin seems to have perceived an opportunity to undermine the CFTC. A few days later Maurin published a clearer endorsement of the CFTC, indicating perhaps that his first letter had not been well received.¹⁰⁷

Cardinal Maurin died soon after in November 1936; with him disappeared any active attempt to undermine the CFTC. His successor Cardinal Gerlier was a former President of the AJCF, who had been a member of the General Commission of the *Semaines sociales* since 1923.¹⁰⁸ Yet Gerlier was not prepared to tolerate deconfessionalization of the CFTC. On the contrary, he presided personally over the silver ju-

principes de liberté syndicale qu'il nous paraît difficile de faire appel à votre syndicat" (*SPF des Ouvriers et employés de soieries. Bulletin Mensuel*, 15-1-1937).

104 R. Rémond, *Catholiques et communistes dans les années trente*, Paris, 1966, pp. 244-51. Christophe, op. cit., pp. 103-4 indicates that some in the hierarchy were worried by the apparent readiness of the JOC to place social above religious issues.

105 *Chronique sociale*, 1936, pp. 563-5; *Nouvelliste*, 18-6-1936. "Quelle doit être [l'attitude du travailleur chrétien] à l'égard des syndicats dits professionnels qui se fondent en ce moment et qui ne nourrissant aucun sentiment d'hostilité contre l'Eglise et la religion? Ces syndicats ne sont pas condamnés et ils ne peuvent l'être. Il est donc permis d'y adhérer".

106 Maurin's view of the SPF is entirely consistent with his reputation as a Maurrasian.

107 *Nouvelliste*, 30-6-1936.

108 On Gerlier see X. de Montclos and A. Latreille, (eds.), *Eglises et chrétiens dans la deuxième guerre mondiale. La région Rhône Alpes*, pp. 13-14.

bilee of Catholic white collar unions in Lyon in November 1937, turning it into a celebration of the Catholicism of the CFTC.¹⁰⁹

There were also signs of a newly critical attitude from within the *Chronique* towards certain CFTC positions. For example, Auguste Crétinon took the CFTC to task for its condemnation of the Reynaud decree laws of November 1938.¹¹⁰ Crétinon had also been involved in setting up a syndicate of private school teachers, in which the Catholic reference was very strong.¹¹¹ The *Cercles d'études* placed great stress upon anti-communism in this period. Its annual programme for 1937 and 1938 was entitled "Le communisme marxiste, le Catholicisme, et les classes moyennes".¹¹² The reference to the "classes moyennes" is a significant one, for this set of ideas was associated more with the PSF than the CFTC. Indeed, the latter conceived of a partnership of unions and business within an expanding capitalist economy, leaving little room for the petty bourgeoisie broadly defined. Certainly the majority of *Chronique* sympathizers did not break with Christian democracy. But there were some links with the PSF. One important figure was Henry Franchet, member of the board of the *Chronique*. Franchet began a front page column for the *Nouveau Journal* in 1936, which he sometimes used to influence the CFTC, stressing, for example, the moral role of the JOC.¹¹³

In 1937 and 1938 there was a reassertion of a parish based Catholic trades unionism against what was seen as the secular and pro-communist JOC. This can be seen as related to a reassertion of the primacy of white collar workers within the CFTC, a group for which Catholicism and conservatism had always been inseparable.¹¹⁴ This coincided with pressures on CFTC members in the factories, and a convergence with the positions of the *patronat*.

The best index of the changing attitudes of the CFTC is its attitude to labour relations. After the strike wave of June 1936 the CFTC participated in many joint *démarches* with the CGT. But it almost never approved of strike action. More often it endorsed the demands of the workers, but disapproved of the methods used to obtain them.¹¹⁵ The CFTC also profited from the defeats of the CGT. Catholic trades unionists, for example, made considerable progress at Gillet after the defeat of a strike of

109 *Chronique sociale de la France*, December 1937, pp. 397-401, 748-9. It included a mass at St. Pothin, heart of traditional Catholicism in the Rhône. In the previous June Gerlier had presided over a celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Catholic trades unionism in France. His theme had been "soyons nous-mêmes", by which he meant the CFTC members should not be ashamed of their Catholicism (Launey, *La CFTC*, p. 373).

110 *Chronique sociale de la France*, December, 1938, pp. 844-852. Raoul Duclos admitted in *La Voix sociale* that his disapproval of his decrees was not shared by all of his colleagues.

111 *Chronique sociale de la France*, October 1937, pp. 745-7. The new union was inaugurated by Chanoine Borne, director of Catholic education.

112 *Programme annuel pour les cercles d'études*, 1938.

113 *Nouveau Journal*, 24-7-1935. This article appeared at about the same time as Gerlier was urging the CFTC to "be themselves" (see note 0). Three days later an article signed "X", perhaps Raoul Duclos, stressed the links between moral and material conditions.

114 Launey, *LA CFTC*, pp. 315-7, suggests that as the CFTC moved back to the right there was a "reprise en main" by the more conservative white collar unions.

115 This was its position in both major strikes of the period—at Gillet in the summer of 1937 and in the building industry in the summer of 1938.

the summer of 1937. Right up to November 1938 the CFTC defended the principle of the forty hour week. It condemned Reynaud's decrees, but also the "political" general strike of 30 November 1938. Yet the SPF's line was identical.¹¹⁶ The CFTC even organized mass entries into workplaces on 30 November.¹¹⁷

Agriculture and the Popular Front

The Popular Front was largely an urban phenomenon. There was no large scale mobilization of the peasantry to compare with the strikes of June. Nor was there a mass movement against them. This was even more the case in the Rhône, where in comparison with urban areas the countryside was generally calm. Yet there remained sources of tension within rural society, and as in the city, the reforms of the Popular Front aggravated them.

One reason for discontent was the continuation of the economic crisis. It is true that in some respects the situation improved from 1936. Above all there was an upturn in wine prices beginning in late 1935.¹¹⁸ Newspaper discussions of wine policy suggest that this improvement benefited in particular small producers of better quality wines, helped perhaps by the introduction of *appellations d'origine* from 1937. Big growers, on the other hand, complained of competition from cheap Algerian wines, and pressed their views in the press of the USE and Federation. The better fortunes of smaller growers seems to have contributed both to halting PSF progress in the Beaujolais, and to a decline of rural socialism and the associated cooperative movement.¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, the newly created *Office du blé*, together with a reduction in harvest size, was responsible for a rise in wheat prices.¹²⁰

But the Rhône was not a major producer of grain. The prices of other products did not improve. Fruit prices remained depressed, and production was badly hit by hail storms and frosts in 1937. One result was a meeting of 400 peasants at Limonest, held under the auspices of the USE, which demanded measures against debts. Dairy prices too were falling and production was hit by an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in 1938.¹²¹ A new problem was the over-production of vegetables. Market gardeners blamed overcrowding of their profession and so demanded controls on those who produced vegetables as a hobby.¹²² At the same time inflation in the prices of manufactured goods moved the terms of trade against the countryside. Employers of

116 SPF-metallurgy opposed *assouplissement* of the forty hours law, and like the CFTC demanded that workers alone should not bear the cost of rearmament. (*Nouvelliste*, 25-11-1938.)

117 *Voix sociale*, 26-11-1938, 10-12-1938.

118 Garrier, op. cit., pp. 602-606.

119 Perrin, op. cit., passim. For the point of view of big growers see Guy de Saint-Laumer in *Union républicaine*, 7-3-1937, 14-3-1937.

120 *Nouvelliste*, 10-4-1937: According to Julien Riboud the Rhône produced 270 quintals of wheat, of which most was destined for home consumption.

121 *Nouvelliste*, 10-4-1937.

122 *Nouvelliste*, 7-6-1937. André Cholley, op. cit., pp. 83-107.

labour were affected by the extension of the Family Allowance Law to agricultural labourers by a decree of August 1937.

The peasantry were also affected by the strikes of 1936. There were relatively few agricultural labourers in the department; most were sons of peasant proprietors working with better off peasant families whilst awaiting their inheritance.¹²³ All the same, the events of June caused even casual labour for the wine harvest to pose conditions to their employers.¹²⁴ Market gardeners were given an additional reason for hostility to the Popular Front by the fact that their employees had begun to organize.¹²⁵ Agricultural trades unions were set up by both CFTC and CGT, supported mainly by vineyard employees. In June the agricultural syndicates of Chaponost and Francheville protested at the adverse effects of the closure of wholesalers during transport strikes, and the paralysis of processing factories during the strawberry harvest.¹²⁶ There was a new transport strike in October. This time there were reports that peasants taking their own milk to market had been attacked by milkmen.¹²⁷

Yet the threat to private property was less explicit than in the towns. In consequence there was less constraint upon conflicts within rural society. Like business leaders, the USE and Chamber of Agriculture tended to present projects to which it was opposed as harmful to small property.¹²⁸ This is evidence of the moral hegemony briefly exercised by the Popular Front and the discredit into which "les gros" had fallen. It is also related to an ongoing attempt by the USE to channel and manipulate pressure from the conservative peasantry. This is evident in USE sponsorship of a rally of market gardeners addressed by Henri Dorgères, for in the past great reservations had been expressed about his demagogic methods.¹²⁹

The rise of the JAC continued. Jean Parrel became a member of the Central Council of the *Office du blé*,¹³⁰ probably against the wishes of Félix Garcin, but this did not prevent him from defending the interests of small producers, or from distancing himself from the intransigent opposition of the majority of conservative delegates to the Office. In the countryside too, though to a lesser extent than in the towns, Popular Front legislation undermined the cohesion of the conservative bloc.¹³¹ Even the

123 Such was the integration of the *domestique* into the Parrel household that he asked Jean-Marie Parrel's permission to get married. Pin, op. cit., p. 124.

124 ADR 4m 236, 23-8-1936, Sub-Prefect of Villefranche.

125 One market gardener told the *Nouvelliste*, "Jamais avant les derniers grèves nous n'avions eu d'ennuis avec nos ouvriers" (22-10-1936).

126 *Nouvelliste*, 30-6-1936.

127 *Nouvelliste*, 10-10-1936.

128 The best example is family allowances for farm labourers. It was argued that in the Rhône most farm labourers were employed by peasants. In reality only a minority of relatively well off peasants employed labour. *Nouvelliste*, 10-4-1936.

129 *Nouvelliste*, 16-11-1936. The rally took place at a time when Dorgères was leading a strike of Parisian market gardeners. JAC influence was also strong among *maraîchers*.

130 Gayet, op. cit., p. 78. Gayet's evidence contradicts Albert Pin's belief that Parrel's candidature had been proposed by Garcin (Pin, op. cit., p. 90).

131 Pin, op. cit., part II, ch. 3, especially p. 93-4. Albert Pin stresses that the law on the *Office du blé* specified that the main occupation of agricultural delegates had to be farming, a measure which favoured Jean Parrel over Félix Garcin.

Nouvelliste, which had campaigned bitterly against this “instrument of revolutionary policy”,¹³² was obliged to admit that the Office had been welcomed by small producers of grain.¹³³ JAC militants also defended the right of agricultural labourers to form separate syndicates, another idea unpalatable to the USE leadership, and yet more evidence of the disruptive effects of the Popular Front. In 1939 JAC militants announced an imminent “révolution paysanne”; Claudius Delorme was briefly elected to the leadership of the USE, thanks to a coup organized by his followers.¹³⁴

For these reasons the authoritarianism evident in agricultural circles before the events of June 1936 persisted. Corporatism and authority continued to be seen as a means to resolve the tensions of rural society. In 1936 the bulletin of the USE expressed support for “La République autoritaire, à base professionnelle”, and recommended to its readers a book by Gustave Hervé entitled “C'est Pétain qu'il nous faut”.¹³⁵

Conclusion

Three general points can be derived from this discussion of the impact of the Popular Front on the interest group politics in the Rhône.

Firstly, the labour laws, and to a lesser extent the *Office du blé* represented another blow to the liberal tradition of elites in industry and agriculture. The influence of the Chamber of Commerce, one time bastion of economic liberty was in decline. Supporters of liberalism were now to be found only in the Federation.

Second, there was on the level of interest group politics a regrouping of capitalists and small businessmen against the CGT under the leadership of the local CGPF (AICA). It was supported by the USE, which turned its 1937 congress into a critique of the Popular Front. The CFTC too lent tacit support. But at the same time all of the pressures which had led business and agriculture towards corporatism and anti-parliamentarism remained active. Only a perceived challenge to private property held this bloc together. The political right in contrast was more deeply divided in this period than at any point in the period under consideration. All of this confirms Ingo Kolboom's argument that the reformed CGPF took over from political parties the task of halting the collapse of a disintegrating bourgeois society.

Third, it might perhaps be surprising that little mention has been made of the mobilization of the *classes moyennes* movement after June 1936. This is because no body could have emerged to group all those who claimed to be a part of it—public

¹³² *Nouvelliste*, 10-10-1936.

¹³³ *Nouvelliste*, 27-12-1938: “Soyons juste: l'Office du blé est apprécié favorablement dans les milieux des petits producteurs, parce qu'il garantit un prix uniforme quel que soit l'importance de l'exploitation de chacun et quel que soit le moment où le vente est effectué”. François Peissel too admitted that the Office had its good side (*Nouveau Journal*, 13-11-1938).

¹³⁴ G. Garrier, “L'union du sud-est des syndicats agricoles de 1888 à 1939”, *Bulletin du centre d'histoire de la région lyonnaise*, 1981.

¹³⁵ *L'Agriculteur du sud-est*, 8-11-1936.

and private sector white collar workers, peasants, small businessmen, technicians, engineers etc. Even sectional groups such as small businessmen did not act separately. Two groups which are of particular interest in the context of conservative politics had hardly any impact at all in interests group politics: engineers and medium capitalist firms.¹³⁶ The notion of the *classes moyennes* was in reality a mythical construction. As such it is best studied as a political phenomenon.

¹³⁶ It is well known that there was a flourishing of engineers' unions after June 1936. Yet apart from a strike by 1,200 supervisory personnel at Berliet, there is hardly any evidence of their activity in the press or any other source. This is especially true of conservative engineers associations like USIC and SIS, even though engineers played a prominent part in the PSF.

Chapter eleven

The militants of the right, 1936 to 1939

The electoral victory of the Popular Front and the strikes of June led to political polarization and a major upheaval in the French right. In the Rhône the *Alliance démocratique* and the PDP collapsed. The *Fédération républicaine* lost many of its supporters to the far right, but proved too deeply rooted to disappear entirely. On the extreme right *Action française* had been dissolved by the government in February 1936. Four months later it was the turn of the *Françistes*, *Jeunesses patriotes*, *Solidarité française* and the *Croix de Feu* to be dissolved. All reappeared under other names. But apart from the *Parti social français* (PSF), the reincarnation of the *Croix de Feu*, all were of marginal significance. Meanwhile a new movement appeared, the *Parti populaire français* (PPF) of the renegade communist Jacques Doriot.

Historians have detected a link between the supposed social composition of the PSF and PPF and their politics. The PPF is seen as proletarian and therefore fascist,¹ while Z. Sternhell sees the PSF as bourgeois and therefore conservative. Pierre Milza, on the other hand sees the latter as an “inter-class party”, and therefore the first modern conservative party in France.² Philippe Machefer describes the PSF as a movement of a petty bourgeoisie menaced by social reform.³

Leaving aside the social determinism which often underlies them, there is reason to question these views of the PSF and PPF. Historians have uncritically accepted data on the background of PPF members published in the party press. The other main piece of evidence—the supposedly working class recruitment of the Marseille section of the party—has been shown conclusively to be false by Paul Jankowsky. In⁴ the case of the PSF scarcely any research has been done into the sociology of militants.

In this chapter it will be argued that three related factors explain the sociology of the two parties: the ongoing struggle for hegemony within the conservative bloc; social and political polarization, and the attraction of a minority of supporters of the left to the far right. Like the *Croix de Feu* the PSF recruited from that section of the bourgeoisie and lower middle class which was disenchanted with business elite. This opposition included bosses of medium family firms deprived of a voice in interest groups, especially in the modern sector, and by social polarization. In contrast the Federation became more than ever a party of the “old elites”, all the more so because

1 J.-P. Brunet, *Jacques Doriot. Du communisme au fascisme*, Paris, 1986, pp. 269. Z. Sternhell, “Strands of French fascism”, *passim*.

2 Milza, *op. cit.*, pp. 138.

3 Machefer, “Le Parti Social Français” *L'Information historique*, pp. 77-8.

4 Paul Jankowsky, *Communism and Collaboration: Simon Sabiani and Politics in Marseille, 1919-1944*, London, 1989.

after June it became difficult to mobilize support in proletarian suburbs. The PPF represented an alliance of the militants of the dissolved leagues with sympathizers recruited from the suburbs, a few of whom were ex-communists.

The Samples

The PSF and FR samples include 1056 and 976 individuals respectively.⁵ The PPF sample of 159 is at least big enough to ascertain the main features of the party. The samples also represent a more homogeneous body of *party* militants than does the pre-1936 sample. There are, nevertheless, certain problems. Rates of identification in electoral lists vary between parties because of the quality of information in the sources.⁶ This presents difficulties only in the case of the PPF, where only two fifths of militants could be identified. It is therefore possible that the proportion of young and working class sympathizers is underestimated. Rates of identification also vary between arrondissements. In the Federation the pattern is much the same as in Chapter 5, with higher rates of identification in the suburbs. There is also a particularly low level of identification for the Federation in the 7th (60%). In the case of the PSF the main problems are above average identification in the 7th (78%) and below average in the 4th (48%) arrondissements. Neither of these sections, however, were large, so the sample is not unduly affected. It is the PPF which presents the greatest difficulties, for there is a much greater variability between sections. To generalize, the PPF sample privileges the contribution of militants in bourgeois and proletarian areas, and diminishes recruitment in districts which are socially unsegregated. None of these distortions, however, need stand in the way of analysis.

Membership

The PSF claimed the enormous figure of 30,000 members in the Rhône in mid-1937, and one year later declared itself to be on the way to 40,000 adherents.⁷ What this figure includes, however, is difficult to say, for children may have been enrolled by their fathers and mothers, and it is not certain whether those who had not paid their subscriptions were eliminated from the lists. Moreover, they do not accord with what is known of individual sections.⁸ Calculations based on police and party estimates of section membership suggest a membership of between 13,000 and 20,000 at the PSF's peak.⁹ A figure in the upper part of the range is suggested by the mobilization, ac-

⁵ See Appendix 4.

⁶ The Federation has the highest rate of identification (79%), followed by the PSF with 66%, and then the PPF of which only 42% could be identified in electoral lists.

⁷ *Volontaire* '36, 16-7-1937, 1-6-1938. *Le Volontaire* '36, 1-15 August 1936, claimed a circulation of 60,000 in nine departments.

⁸ ADR 4m 236, 20-10-1938. For example a police report stated that in October 1938 that there were 700 members in one of the three sections in the 2nd arrondissement.

⁹ Membership of sections varied between 600 and 900. There were twenty-two sections.

according to the police, of 15,000 supporters for the parade of 11 November 1938.¹⁰ Whatever the real figure, there can be no doubt that the PSF was the largest political movement ever seen in the Rhône. It was considerably larger than any of the left wing parties.¹¹ Furthermore, in September 1936 the PSF showed that it was an electoral force by winning a by-election for the Arrondissement Council in the 2nd arrondissement.

Beside the PSF the PPF was not very significant.¹² Police reports stress the failure of the party to recruit more than a few hundred adherents in the department. Despite issuing 60-80,000 invitations to the regional conference of July 1937 only 1,200 people turned up.¹³ Not surprisingly the PPF was of marginal significance in electoral terms. Unless the party stood as joint candidate of the right it was incapable of winning more than four or five percent of the vote. Like the JP before it the PPF owed whatever importance it had to collaboration with the Federation.¹⁴

As for the Federation, the defeat in the 2nd arrondissement by-election in September 1936 seemed to presage the disappearance of the party. At the departmental congress of the Federation in January 1937 it was admitted that many adherents had deserted to new formations.¹⁵ Yet as time went on the FR appears to have recovered some ground. Certainly there was a decline in the vitality of local committees, but press accounts of their activities are consistent with a reasonably high membership. In rural areas in particular the Federation remained a force in electoral terms. Probably PSF and Federation were about equal in vote winning power.

The Political Backgrounds of Militants

The PSF

In the Rhône formation of the PSF was announced in the *Nouvelliste* on June 24th. The first members were signed up in mid-July.¹⁶ At the end of the month 2,500 founding members travelled to Lyon from seven departments to hear La Rocque speak. A few days later the new party organ, *Le Volontaire '36*, appeared. At the end

10 Freynet, the departmental leader, told a meeting in the 2nd arrondissement that he expected 30,000 on this parade. The PSF press subsequently reported 20,000 marchers. One section, the 7th, claimed that half of its 600 plus members had participated.

11 Pinol and Moissonnier, op. cit., put membership of the PCF at 5,200 in the Rhône in 1939. N. Greene, *Crisis and decline: The French Socialist Party in the Popular Front Era*, Ithaca, 1969, p. 308, puts the SFIO at a maximum of 2,600 in 1938.

12 D. Wolf, *Doriot: Du Communisme au Collaboration*, Paris, 1971, p. 220, quotes a figure of 6,000 in the region. Since regional leader Albert Beugras claimed only 3,000 in 1938 this is surely an over-estimate. (*L'Attaque*, 19-2-1938).

13 ADR 4m 263, 23-12-1936. 29-7-1937. The PPF had to abandon its plan to demonstrate on 11 November 1937, even though it might have been expected to have been able to make a showing at a time of intense social conflict.

14 Further evidence of numerical insignificance comes from the interrogation of Henri Carton in 1945: "Je me suis occupé de la propagande PPF dans le but de grossir nos rangs. Malgré nos efforts en ce sens les résultats acquis étaient de faible importance". ADR Cour de Justice de Lyon 1454.

15 AN 317 AP 79. Report of Lavalette to departmental congress, January 1937.

16 *Nouvelliste*, 24-6-1936, 9-7-1936. The first offices were both in the centre of the city at quai Bondy and quai de Retz.

of the year a departmental federation was officially constituted, grouping fourteen sections.¹⁷

The continuities with the *Croix de Feu* are unmistakable at the level of leadership. Only one *Croix de Feu* leader did not join the PSF.¹⁸ The editorial team of *Le Volontaire '36* stressed its continuity with that which had produced *Le Flambeau du sud-est* and its determination to maintain the spirit of the *Croix de Feu*.¹⁹ Whether the PSF inherited the rank and file of the *Croix de Feu* is impossible to determine with any certainty. The only police report on this subject stated in September that the PSF in Tarare had not yet succeeded in grouping all former *Croix de Feu* members.²⁰ But Tarare may be an exception, for after promising beginnings by the *Croix de Feu* the PSF do not seem to have made great headway. In the rest of the department the fact that the PSF made progress essentially in the areas where the *Croix de Feu* had been strong suggests continuity.

We are on safer ground in saying that the majority of PSF members who had previously been politically active came from the parliamentary right. Octave Lavalette admitted losses from the Federation.²¹ The geographical and social background of PSF militants suggests recruitment from the PDP and Alliance electorate too. Yet few militants of the old right played a sufficiently visible role in the PSF to find their way into our sample.²² The reason is partly that the most active adherents—those in our sample—remained faithful to their party, and partly that it was officially policy in the PSF that cadres should not be drawn from those who had played a prominent part in other movements.²³ This is perhaps also why there is only one former PDP member,²⁴ and one former *Action française* leaguer, Marcel Perdriel, even though *La République Lyonnaise* admitted losses to the *Croix de Feu*.²⁵

It is at the level of voting behaviour that the continuity of PSF and the parliamentary right is most evident, in spite of the PSF's claims to have bitten into the left's electorate.²⁶ The only election in which both Federation and PSF stood together with the three Popular Front parties was for a *Conseil d'arrondissement* seat in November 1936 in the seven southern polling districts of the 2nd arrondissement. The seat had fallen vacant thanks to the death of a Federation member. To general surprise the PSF

17 *Nouvelliste*, 1-12-1936.

18 Alex Béraud, leader of the second sector. The only other major change was that Etienne Rouillon took over PSF organization in Algeria, his duties as regional delegate being taken on by General Grollemund.

19 *Le Volontaire '36*, 1-15 August 1937: "notre équipe est indissoluble comme notre esprit, animé de la mystique Croix de Feu. Notre volonté demeure".

20 ADR 4m 244, 23-9-1936.

21 AN 317 AP 79, report to congress of Federation, January 1937. "Il est indéniable--et l'élection du 2^e arrondissement l'a démontré--que ces partis ont recruté abondamment dans nos rangs et que la masse de leur adhérents est faite, en grande partie, de nos militants".

22 An exception was Charles Vianney, who became a departmental orator in the PSF.

23 *Bulletin d'information du PSF*, 26-6-1937.

24 Dr. Aude of Vaugneray.

25 *La République lyonnaise*, 28-12-1935.

26 ADR 4m 236, 23-1-1937. The party's aim was to address itself first to sympathizers, and then to a group referred to by party leaders as "les évolués", those who had voted for the Popular Front, but now regretted it.

outdistanced the Federation on the first ballot, and won on the second.²⁷ The PSF vote correlates better with the 1936 vote for the right than does that of the Federation. Indeed, rather than winning over the left, the PSF helped restore the unity of the Popular Front. On the second round the left vote increased substantially.²⁸

This conclusion is supported by analysis of the local elections of October 1937. For these elections the right put up a single candidate in most constituencies, so it is difficult to assess the separate appeal of Federation and PSF. Nonetheless, it is clear that the Federation had most success in winning Radical support, and indeed had greater appeal to the right. Because it was confined mainly to difficult constituencies, the PSF won no seats at all. Even in the south of the 5th arrondissement, where the right would normally have expected to win, the PSF was defeated on the second ballot because of the unwillingness of Radicals to vote for it. And whereas the six Federation candidates in the agglomeration were able to maintain more than 90% of the right's 1936 votes, two of the three PSF candidates in the agglomeration suffered embarrassing set-backs, winning only 81 and 83%. Where it is possible to make a comparison, the picture is similar in the countryside.²⁹ Here too it would seem that the Federation had the greater success. Two of the three Federation candidates gained 98% of the right's 1936 vote.³⁰ In the four cases where the PSF was the sole party of the right it did substantially less well. In Neuville it gained only three quarters of the 1936 vote.³¹ These figures confirm François Goguel's conclusion that the PSF would not in 1940 have made the electoral breakthrough upon which it counted.³²

There is one exception to this pattern. In the canton of St Laurent de Chamousset there was in 1937 a bitterly fought contest between PSF and Federation, which resulted in a victory for the latter by forty-four votes. The Radicals put up no candidate, calling upon their supporters to abstain. In the event most of them probably voted for the PSF. Whereas the Federation vote correlates best with the 1936 conservative vote, that of the PSF correlates better with the Radical vote. The reason lies in the centrality of the religious issue in mountain politics. The close identification of the Federation with the clergy, Radical voters preferred the more secular PSF as a means of expressing hostility to the Popular Front.

27 ADR élections partielles, 1936, 5-11-1936: the Prefect said of the PSF candidate: "Influence politique assez limitée—Chances minimes d'être élu".

28 ADR élections partielles, 1936: on the first ballot much of the Radical electorate abstained. Between rounds the Popular Front parties produced a poster which presented the election as a confrontation between fascism and democracy.

29 In all but eight cantons the picture is complicated by the failure of the Radicals to present a candidate, or by the right's support on the first ballot for an anti-Popular Front Radical.

30 On the other hand the Federation lost 28% of the right's 1936 vote in the canton of Belleville because of the presence of the Radical senator Bender.

31 The PSF gained 95% of the 1936 vote in Limonest, 90% in l'Arbresle and 86% in Anse. Losses were perhaps inflated in Neuville because the 1936 vote for the right had been inflated because this was the home canton of deputy Peissel.

32 F. Goguel, "Les élections législatives et sénatorielles partielles", in R. Rémond and J. Bourdin (eds.), *Edouard Daladier, chef de gouvernement*, Paris, 1977. Howlett, op. cit., p. 323.

Ex-Radicals reinforced the anti-establishment disposition of the party. But such radicalism owed more to the PSF's recruitment from groups previously touched by movements in the orbit of the centre right and Federation left. This is impossible to prove through electoral analysis, but can be demonstrated by looking at party activists.

The PPF

More problematic is the political origin of the PPF. It is certain that the national leadership of the party was dominated by ex-communists. Relying on statistics published by the party press Jean-Paul Brunet suggests that 39% of the rank and file had had no prior political affiliation, 33% had come from the left, and 27% from the right.³³ It is to be doubted whether much value can be attached to these figures, not simply because they derive from the party, but because the division into three fairly equal parts reflects the ternary vision of society so popular on the right in this period.³⁴ Furthermore, for this level of ex-communist support for the PPF to have been real, there would have had to have been far more dissidence in the PCF across France. In fact the party effectively prevented Doriotist influence from spreading to other areas.³⁵ In the Rhône the emergence of the PPF owed more to the dissolution of the leagues, the perennial search of the right for a movement able to win over the working class, and to the impact of June 36 on a minority of workers and white collar workers in the suburbs.

Albert Beugras was a young engineer at Rhône-Poulenc in Péage de Roussillon. Before 1936 he had not been an politically active, but his favourite reading, *Gringoire*, *Candide* and *Je Suis Partout*, situated him on the right. Having been forced to flee his home as a result of the strikes of June 1936, Beugras found himself in Paris at the time of Doriot's "Rendez-vous de Saint-Denis". Beugras adhered to the PPF five days after its formation. Because Doriot knew no-one else in Lyon, Beugras was immediately named *délégué* for the south-east.³⁶

In Lyon Beugras found a handful of adherents. Several were members of the obscure *Comités de rassemblement anti-sovietique* (CRAS). These had been formed as a front for the dissolved *Françistes*. But they served as means of linking former members of all the dissolved leagues, and even included members of the Federation.³⁷ In the following months CRAS members, such as Adrian Anscheling of *Solidarité française* and the *Françiste* leader Fernand Sape, joined the PPF.³⁸

Sape was from a conservative background. The son of a sexton in the parish of St. Pothin, he had worked his way up from a printers' job at the *Nouveau Journal* to

33 Brunet, op. cit., pp. 230-231.

34 Boltanski, op. cit., pp. 52-3.

35 As Brunet himself argues, op. cit., p. 174-5.

36 AN Cour de Justice de la Seine, 514 4073¹; Marie Chaix, *Les lauriers du lac de Constance*, Paris, 1974.

37 *L'Attaque*, June/July 1936, October, 1936. That the PSF in this period were also engaged in clandestine contacts with other leagues was reported to me by Monsieur Guy Jarrosson, one-time President of the JP.

38 F¹ 14 818, 17-9-1936. Sape was sometimes known by his pen name Philippe Dreux.

become a journalist on the *Nouvelliste*, and subsequently on several other papers in Brittany and at St. Etienne. At the age of twenty he had followed Etienne de Raulin out of the JP, and then joined with Dr. Millet in his break with De Raulin. After his military service Sape was active in the youth group of the Federation. He left the latter in 1934 for the *Françistes*. Marcel Bucard gave him the task of setting up a section of the league in St. Etienne. In 1935 he returned to Lyon to found a *Françiste* journal, first published as *l'Attaque* in April 1936. After the dissolution of the *Françistes* Sape wrote articles in favour of the PPF. In June 1937 he joined the PPF, whilst *L'Attaque* became the party journal. Sape later claimed that he had been obliged to take this step because his radical social policies had upset his financial backers.³⁹

Within the PPF Sape joined a number of other well-known militants of dissolved leagues. There were at least three ex-members of the JP, including Jean Berlioz, one-time President.⁴⁰ There were five known members of *Action française*.⁴¹ One ex-royalist told the police in 1945 that he had been recruited by Paul Chartron, who had persuaded him that the PPF now represented the only means of continuing the anti-communist struggle.⁴² According to the police the PPF also won the sympathy of younger elements in the PSF, who found la Rocque's party too staid.⁴³ The PPF also included one recruit from the centre right: the municipal councillor and President of the Lyon section of the UNC, Emile Roux.⁴⁴

It is possible to identify only three recruits from the left. None of them were founder members of the party. One was Francis André. Better known as "gueule tor due" because of a face disfigured in a car accident, André was to become notorious during the war for his anti-resistance activities. Until 1937 André had been a PCF member and sports correspondent of its Lyon journal. At some time in 1937 he joined the PPF, where he played a leading role only after 1940.⁴⁵ Neither of the other ex-communists played a visible role in the PPF until the war years.

It is true that some of those who had come to the PPF from dissolved leagues were subsequently eliminated. Paul Chartron was expelled in early 1937 because his royalist opinions brought him into conflict with Beugras.⁴⁶ Fernand Sape departed at the end of the year, partly because he had embezzled 5,000 francs from the party, but

39 ADR Cour de Justice du Rhône, 1294.

40 Louis Allaix and Jean-Pierre Foëx had passed through the JP and *Françistes*.

41 They included the lawyer Pierre Dufès and a commissaire who had been involved in several violent incidents, Georges Fercit.

42 AN Cour de Justice de la Seine, 514 4703¹.

43 ADR 4m 236, 5-12-1936, 20-11-1937. There is no reason to doubt this, but because of the deficiencies of the *Croix de Feu* sample it is possible to identify only one such convert—Lucien Petre of Villefrance.

44 The sources for the political backgrounds of these militants are partly my own sample and partly the dossiers of the Courts of Justice of the Rhône and the Seine.

45 ADR, Cour de Justice, dossier Francis André; G. Chauvy, *Lyon, 1940-1944*, Paris, 1985, pp. 324-5. Another former communist, Ennemond Chambon, one time secretary of the CGT metallurgy in the south-east, joined in 1939 in the wake of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Thirdly, Joseph Desgeorges had been a member of the *Front social* of Gaston Bergery and secretary of the building section of the anarcho-syndicalist CGTSR. He joined the CGT in the wake of the defeat of the 1938 building strike (ADR, Cour de Justice, 1420(1)).

46 AN Cour de Justice de la Seine, 514 4703¹.

also because he had been opposed to Doriot's policy of alliance with the Federation.⁴⁷ Yet the PPF in Lyon clearly originated on the far right. Zeev Sternhell's view that fascism originates on the left in a revision of Marxism must be questioned. Even if the majority of PPF activists had not previously been politically active, like Beugras their opinions had probably been conservative. All the same the attraction of the PPF for ex-Communists must be taken seriously, for there is no equivalent in any other party of the right or extreme-right. The radicalism of the fascist right often acted as a pole of attraction for dissidents of the left.

Geographical Implantation

Table 19 shows that the Federation was substantially more rural than it had been before June 1936, though it remained a little under-represented in relation to the proportion of the electorate resident in the countryside.⁴⁸ The PSF was more urban than the Federation, as it was nationally.⁴⁹ The PPF, not shown on the table, was more urban still, for only three militants lived outside the agglomeration.

Table 19: The Right in the Rhône, July 1936 to 1939 (percent)			
Party	Agglom	Dept	Total
Federation	61	39	976
PSF	73	28	1056
Electorate	65	35	236018

Table 20: Militants of the Right by Region, July 1936 to 1939(Percent)			
Region	FR	PSF	Pop
Plateau Lyonnais	47	55	49
Beaujolais viticole	20	14	15
Monts du Lyonnais	19	14	13
Monts du Beaujolais	15	17	23
Total	318	196	

Within the department the implantation of Federation militants differs in some measure from that of previous periods, as Table 20 shows.⁵⁰ The most striking change is the decline in the proportion of militants in the wine-growing Beaujolais. The PSF did not do spectacularly well there either, so the explanation cannot be competition from

⁴⁷ See chapter twelve.

⁴⁸ In 1928 to June 1936 55% of sympathizers had resided outside of the agglomeration.

⁴⁹ J.-N. Jeanenney, "La Fédération républicaine" in R. Rémond and J. Bourdin, *La France et les françaises*, Paris, 1979.

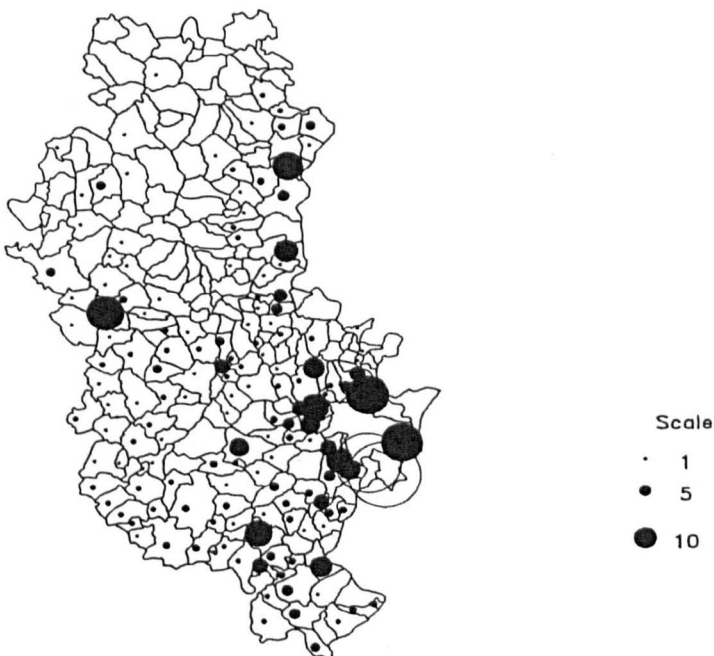
⁵⁰ See Table 5 in Chapter 6.

The Federation Republicaine
July 1936 to 1939



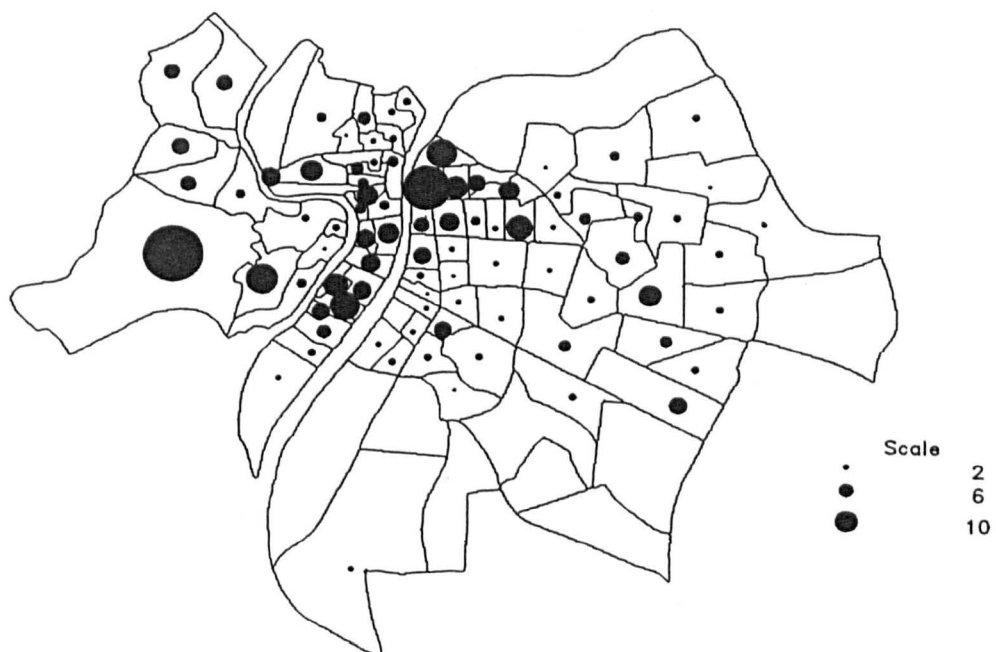
Map 11.03

The Federation Republicaine
July 1936 to 1939



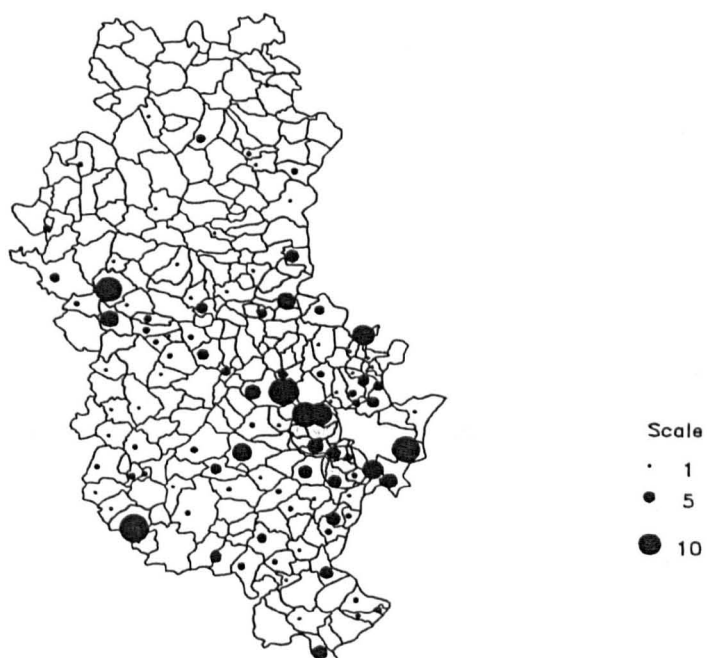
Map 11.04

The Parti Social Francais
July 1936 to 1939



Map 11.01

The Parti Social Francais
July 1936 to 1939



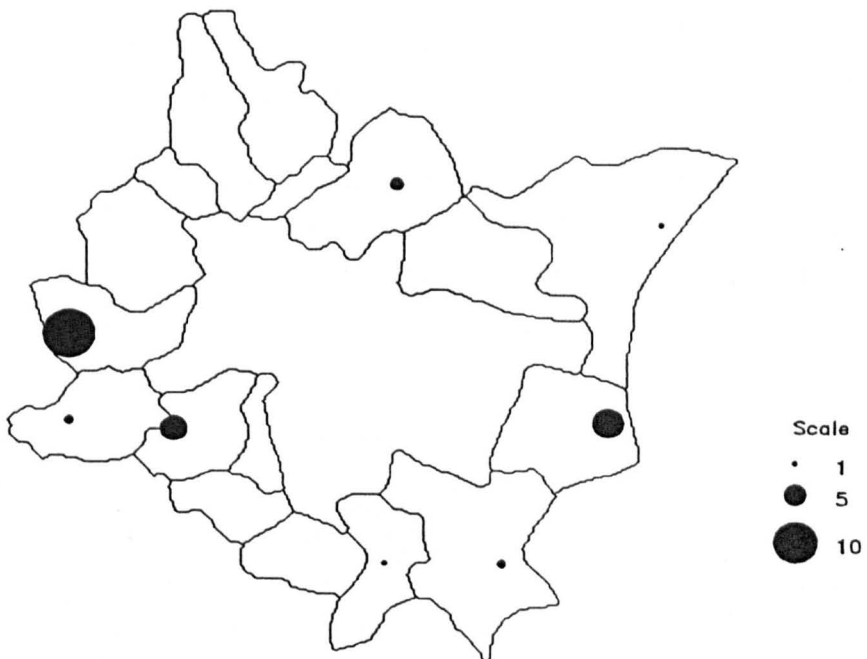
Map 11.02

The Parti Populaire Français
July 1936 to 1939



Map 11.05

The Parti Populaire Français
July 1936 to 1939



Map 11.06

that source. More likely is that the relative health of the economy in Villefranche and the rise in wine prices led to a general decline in political tension.

Because of the relative decline of the Federation in the Beaujolais implantation in all other areas increases. Even the decline of the Federation on the Plateau which had characterized the previous period was halted.⁵¹ As Map 11.04 shows this improvement was most marked in industrial communes like l'Arbresle and Vaugneray. Part of the explanation for this is that François Peissel, influential in this area, was now more or less reconciled with Victor Perret. With the rise of the *Croix de Feu*, Perret perhaps appeared rather more Republican.

In spite of the relative recovery of the Federation on the plateau, Table 20 and Map 11.04 show that the Federation did better in areas of "traditional" conservatism than the PSF. The Federation made substantial progress in the Monts du Beaujolais, where it had been organized only since Victor Perret's electoral campaign of 1936. Even in wine-growing areas the Federation remained over-represented in comparison to the proportion of the electorate in that area, and did best of all in Belleville canton, where big landowners were most numerous. This confirms the national picture, for the PSF had few sections in formerly monarchist rural areas like the west.⁵²

Map 11.02 shows that PSF militants were less dispersed than those of the Federation. This is because whereas the Federation relied upon a network of village notables for support, the PSF was dependent upon party activists resident in Lyon and small towns.⁵³ This is why PSF militants cluster along the main lines of communication from Lyon. Most noticeable is the line of militants along the National 7 From Lyon to Tarare, and then on to Amplepuis and Thizy. Militants are also found along the route through the mountains in the Brévenne Valley, the main road from Lyon to St Etienne, and along the north-south Rhône-Saône axis. Table 20 also shows that the PSF had established itself in all conservative areas, except the Beaujolais, and was even present where the Federation had at one time been unchallenged.⁵⁴ The politics of deference were breaking down.

The distribution of Federation militants in the agglomeration exaggerates features already apparent before June 1936. Graph 28 and Map 11.03 show that the communes of the proletarian south east *banlieu* remain the most over-represented region in the Federation sample.⁵⁵ But the place of such communes is reduced, con-

51 Federation militants rose from 41% on the Plateau in 1933 to 47% in 1936 to 1939. This is not an enormous difference given the nature of the sample, but it is enough to say that previous decline had been halted.

52 Jeanenney, "La Fédération", p. 349.

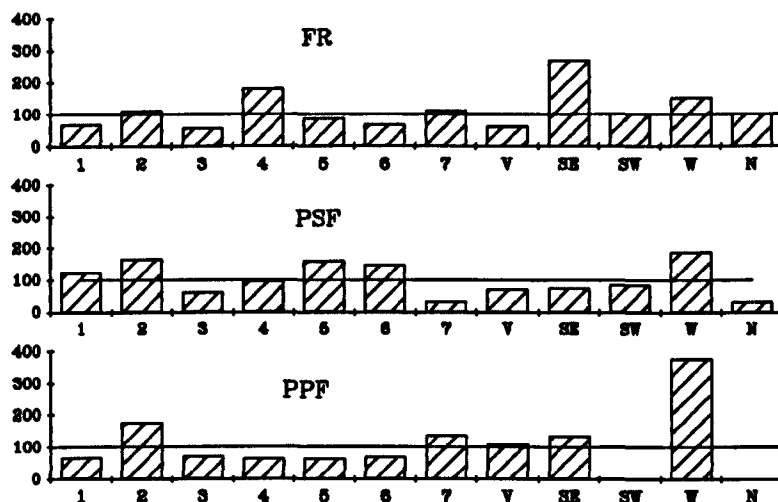
53 *Volontaire* '36, 16-7-1937. Squads of EVP would give out tracts at fairs.

54 Furthermore, the sample probably underestimates the strength of the PSF in the Monts du Lyonnais. Given that the PSF placed so much emphasis on winning the *Conseil général* seat in St Laurent de Chamousset in 1937 it is likely that the party had rather more support in the canton than is suggested by the ten militants in our sample.

55 The appropriate comparison is with Graph 5 and Map 5.8 in Chapter five. The south-east *banlieu* comprises Vénissieux, Vaulx en Velin, Bron, St. Fons; the SW *banlieu* is composed of Oullins, Pierre Bénite, La Mulatière; the western is composed of St Foy, Francheville, Tassin, Ecully, while the north consists of the two communes of Caluire and St Rambert.

firming suspicions that overrepresentation was partly due to the nature of the sample. Furthermore, committees in such areas met less and less frequently after June 1936. That of Vénissieux was amalgamated with that of neighbouring St. Fons. Districts inhabited by the "old bourgeoisie" and their clientele also stand out: the western residential suburbs and the 2nd arrondissement. Within the latter area Map 11.03 shows a new concentration in the area between Bellecour and Ainay, *quartier* of the aristocracy and conservative bourgeoisie.⁵⁶ Another area of strength was in the 4th and 7th arrondissements, where the Federation possessed close links to Parish *cercles*. In contrast to its strength in Vénissieux, the Federation was weak in Villeurbanne, the southern part of the 7th and the eastern part of the 3rd, which suggests that the party did less well in working class districts where there was a long tradition of socialism.

Graph 28: Geography of the Right in the Agglomeration, July 1936 to 1939



The five areas in which the PSF is over-represented all contain a substantial bourgeois population: the 1st, 2nd, 5th and 6th arrondissements and the western residential suburbs. No less than 46% of PSF militants lived in bourgeois areas as they are defined by J-L. Pinol.⁵⁷ In districts such as 505 and 607 PSF supporters were very numerous indeed. The real density of PSF members was higher still. For example section 67, which covered districts 601 to 603, claimed that it had 587 members in June 1938.⁵⁸ If this figure is accepted then it would mean that membership of the PSF

⁵⁶ Under-representation of the Federation in the 1st arrondissement may well be an anomaly. The political committee of the first hardly met. Activity in this area, especially after June 1936 was focussed upon a satellite of the Federation, the *Cercle des travailleurs*. Those who attended this cercle were, however, not included in the sample, just as the members of the *Foyer de Perreche* were not. This tends to lead to an under-representation of the Federation in the whole of the peninsula, and consequently diminishes the extent to which it was a movement of the old elites.

⁵⁷ See Chapter 4, Map 4.1.

⁵⁸ *Volontaire* 36, 1-6-1938.

was equivalent to 12% of the electorate, and 37% of conservative voters.⁵⁹ It should, of course, be remembered that all PSF members were not male, unlike the electorate.

Unlike the Federation the PSF was well implanted in all ruling class districts. In terms of membership the 6th arrondissement, with its six sections, was the most important. On the other hand, PSF members are not as over-represented in the 6th as they are in either the 2nd, 5th, or western suburbs. The main point, however, is that in geographical terms the PSF bridged the historic opposition between the Brotteaux and the peninsula, and drew support from areas in which both the Alliance and the Federation had been strong.

The PSF shared the difficulty of the Federation in penetrating unsegregated areas like the 3rd arrondissement and working class areas like Villeurbanne. Where the PSF differs is that it is weak in all working class and unsegregated areas. The only real exception is the proletarian commune of Oullins. Privately the PSF admitted this weakness. Louis Pillot, President in the 5th arrondissement, admitted that the working class district of Vaise (districts 501 and 502) "entirely escapes [my] influence".⁶⁰

Given the conventional image of the PPF it is perhaps surprising to find that almost as great a proportion of PPF militants live in bourgeois areas of the city as did those of the PSF. PPF implantation resembles that of *Action française* in its predilection for the central district of the 2nd arrondissement, the western parts of the 1st and suburban communes like Tassin. But the PPF also did relatively better than other movements in working class districts.⁶¹ The PPF's most vibrant section was in Villeurbanne. The only rival was that of the 2nd arrondissement, but it was decimated by expulsions at the end of 1937. Thus the geographical distribution of the PPF confirms the dualism seen in the political origins of its members.

Age

The three parties correspond to three different generations. Graph 29 shows that the age profile of the Federation is almost a mirror image of that of the PPF.⁶² Whereas one third of Federation militants were aged over sixty, an equal proportion of those of the PPF were aged twenty-nine or less. The PSF falls somewhere between these two parties. If the agglomeration alone is considered then the differences between the parties are somewhat reduced; even the Federation retains a certain vitality, for 31% of its militants are aged less than forty.

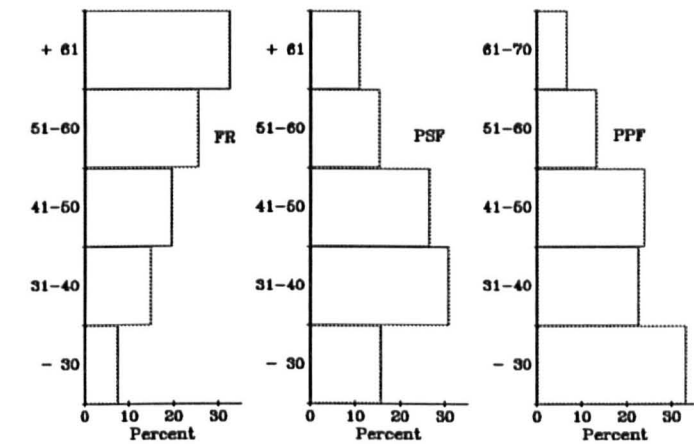
⁵⁹ Using a combination of police and party sources it is possible to obtain similar densities of 12% and 28% in the 2nd arrondissement. Within these two areas the true level of concentration would doubtless have been higher still, for both sections included proletarian districts, where there were hardly any PSF militants.

⁶⁰ *Fonds La Rocque*, carton 172, (hereafter AN 451 AP), Mme. de Préval to Kemlin, 9-10-1937. Moreover, working class PSF members were more numerous in Vaise than anywhere else.

⁶¹ There is a small overrepresentation of PPF militants in districts defined by J-L. Pinol as proletarian, and quite a substantial one in the often working class "railway districts".

⁶² Age is calculated for 1938.

Graph 29: Age of Militants in the Rhône, July 1936 to August 1937



The PPF is the only party of all those considered in which the proportion of under-thirties is greater than in the electorate as a whole. For many PPF members the social and political struggles of the early 1930s were formative experiences. Perhaps surprisingly the PSF does better in the thirty-one to forty age group than in the forty-one to fifties, that in which veterans were most numerous. Doubtless the proportion of veterans had been falling since the creation of the VN in late 1933. Nevertheless, the nucleus of the PSF was formed by men who had served in the First World War, especially as according to the police some younger PSF militants deserted to the PPF in late 1936.⁶³ Federation militants were considerably older than they had been in the years before June 1936.⁶⁴ More than ever the party represented the generation of the Dreyfus affair.

Origins

The birthplace of all militants in the department is shown in Table 21. The Federation counted the greatest proportion of locally born militants; the figure of 67% is identical to that in previous years. PSF militants, and even more those of the PPF, were more likely to have been born outside the department. The proportion of PPF militants who had been born outside of the Rhône-Alps region is also considerably higher than in either of the other parties.

If the agglomeration alone is considered (Table 22) then the differences between the Federation and the PSF are virtually eliminated. It is not at first sight possible to say which of the two parties was the most “Lyonnais”. Yet in view of the Federation's age profile, and given the fact that natives were rare in the older generation,

63 ADR 4m 236, 20-11-1936.

64 The proportion of over sixties rose from 24% to 33%. In the countryside no less than 42% of Federation militants were aged over sixty, whilst two thirds were more than fifty years old.

it is legitimate to describe the Federation as more “Lyonnais” than its rival.⁶⁵ Furthermore, natives of the agglomeration were more likely to live in the space of the “old bourgeoisie” and those unsegregated areas like the 4th and 7th arrondissements where the *Oeuvre des cercles* was strong. This is another reason why the PSF was able to see itself as an “anti-establishment party”, even though its own members were in one sense just as “Lyonnais”. The PPF was even less rooted in the city than the PSF. The rarity of natives of the agglomeration in the former is all the more significant in view of the youthfulness of PPF members. We shall see, however, that the PPF as a whole cannot be described as an “outsider” party. It was mainly those militants who were working class who had been born outside the city.

Table 21: Geographical Origins of Militants of the Right in the Rhône, 1936 to 1939
(percent)⁶⁶

Party	Rhône	Rhône-Alps	Other	Total
FR	67	20	13	760
PSF	57	22	18	691
PPF	44	25	34	59

Table 22: Party by Geographical Origin in the Agglomeration, 1936 to 1939 (percent)

Party	NTA	MRA	MFR	NHF	Tot
FR	50	32	16	2	451
PSF	47	32	17	3	501
PPF	34	33	26	5	57
Elect	39	43	19		

Table 23 Migrants in the Agglomeration by type of Commune of Birth

	Rural	Urban
FR	57	43
PSF	32	67
PPF	22	78

Table 23 shows migrant supporters in the agglomeration broken down by the type of commune in which they had been born. In the PSF 67% of migrants were born

⁶⁵ Indeed, the proportion of natives of the agglomeration in the Federation rose substantially after 1936.

⁶⁶ “Other” includes militants born in the rest of France together with a small number who had been born abroad.

in communes with populations of more than 2,000 inhabitants, compared to only 43% of Federation migrants. The PPF is the most urban of all in its recruitment. Just as the Federation was more rural in its geographical implantation, so it was in terms of the origins of its urban-dwelling members.

Table 24: Origins of the Federation and PSF militants in the countryside, 1936-9 ⁶⁷		
Origin	FR	PSF
Lives in commune of birth	53	31
Migration within canton	11	6
Migration within Rhône	10	13
Agglomeration	10	14
Rhône-Alps	10	26
France	6	11
Total	307	187

Table 24 shows that there is an equally marked contrast between the PSF and the Federation outside of the agglomeration.⁶⁸ More than half of Federation sympathizers lived in the commune in which they had been born, whereas less than one third of PSF supporters did so. PSF supporters were considerably more likely to have been born outside of the department. They were also more likely to have been born in the agglomeration, and indeed in urban communes in general: 52% of PSF migrants in the countryside had been born in urban communes, compared to 40% of those backing the Federation. This reflects the fact that the PSF tended to recruit in small towns rather than in peasant-dominated villages. In this the PSF resembled the Radicals.

Social Class

Graph 30, which shows social class in percentage terms, reveals that the clearest opposition is between the mainly bourgeois PSF and the more popular PPF. The PSF also differs quite substantially from the Federation, recruiting a greater proportion of its members in all sections of the ruling class, and also among both higher and lower grade white collar workers. The Federation, on the other hand is more attractive to workers and farmers.

There is little evidence here to support P. Milza's contention that the PSF had begun to take root in the working class, thereby becoming a "modern inter-class force".⁶⁹ True, the PSF had *some* support in all classes, and as such represented a major threat to the Federation. The PSF was the first party since the ALP to challenge the Federation in the countryside. But in P. Milza's terms the Federation had the

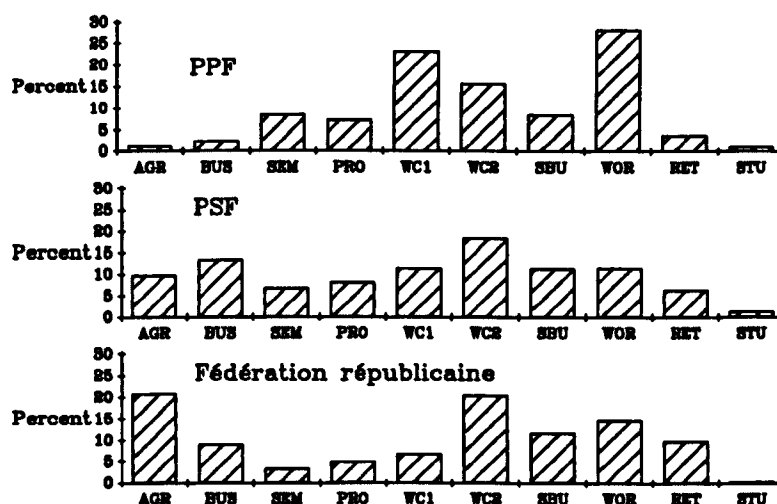
⁶⁷ Percentages are calculated only in relation to migrants born in metropolitan France.

⁶⁸ The origins of Federation sympathizers is more or less identical to the pre-June 1936 period.

⁶⁹ Milza, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-9. Irvine, "The Croix de Feu" is also wrong on this score.

greater claim to being an inter-class party. It is perhaps more plausible to see PSF as a mass version of the lay centre right. It has the same over-representation in all sections of the ruling class; like the centre right it does well among senior managers and engineers, who make up 3% of the Federation sample compared to 7% of PSF militants. Unlike the centre right the PSF had wide support among white collar workers and peasants, but here the influence of social Catholicism in the Federation left would have to be taken into account.

Graph 30: Social Class of Militants in the Rhône, July 1936 to August 1939



In comparison with the pre-June 1936 situation the most notable change in the Federation is the substantial fall in the number of farmers, a finding in keeping with the more urban nature of the party in this period. The explanation for this is firstly that many rural mayors only supported the Federation in election periods, of which there was only one after June 1936. Secondly, social conflict in these years was a mainly urban phenomenon. At a time when the PSF made rapid progress amongst the bourgeoisie, the Federation fell back on its urban clientele of workers and white collar workers.

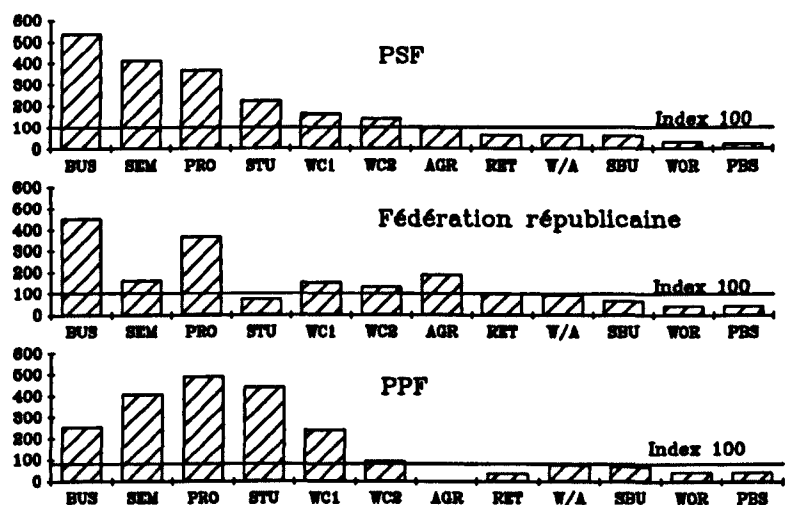
The PPF graph presents a paradoxical appearance, very different to any of the parties considered so far. On the one hand it was better represented than either of its rivals amongst both senior managers and higher grade white collar workers, who represent 32% of all adherents. On the other, the PPF comprised what for a right wing party was a small proportion of businessmen (2%), and a large number of workers (28%). Again we see the dualism of the PPF.

The Agglomeration

In Graph 31 militants in the agglomeration are represented in relation to their significance in the electorate as a whole. For the same reasons as in Graph 16 in Chapter six, the occupations used here are those given in the electoral list. Hence the inclusion of the category “workers or artisans”.⁷⁰

As before June 1936 the bourgeoisie are strongly over-represented in all parties, including the PSF. The differences between the parties in respect of their appeal to the various sectors of the bourgeoisie are also as before. All three are strongly over-represented in the liberal professions. The main differences are that whereas the PPF is most overrepresented among the “salaried bourgeoisie” and students, the Federation does best among businessmen, and the PSF among both businessmen, managers and engineers.⁷¹

Graph 31: The Right in the Agglomeration, June 1936 to 1939



None of the three parties can be described as middle class in the broadest sense of the term. Both PSF and PPF include a greater than expected proportion of private sector white collar workers, but are under-represented in those sections of the lower middle class where the right had traditionally been weak: small business and especially the white collar workers of the public sector. It is difficult to agree with P. Machefer's contention that the PSF were a movement of the “declining” petty-bourgeoisie.

Neither does Graph 31 make it possible to describe the PPF as proletarian. Partly this is because when occupation on electoral list alone is used, as it was in this

70 As in graph 16 in chapter six, the agglomeration in this case means the eleven communes analysed by Jean-Luc Pinol, together with Ecully, Francheville, Tassin and St. Rambert.

71 These differences between the parties are all magnified if only those Federation militants who appear in the sources only after June 1936 are considered.

case, then the number of workers in the PPF is reduced.⁷² All the same, the distortion is not large enough for us to modify our conclusion. Whilst the PPF included a greater proportion of workers than any other party of the right, and this is something which needs to be explained, it was nevertheless more attractive to the bourgeoisie than to the proletariat.⁷³

Table 25: Leaders of the Right in the Agglomeration ⁷⁴			
	FR	PSF	PPF
AGR	1	-	-
BUS	11	21	1
SEM	5	13	4
PRO	7	7	-
WC1	11	5	5
WC2	4	9	2
SBU	2	-	2
WOR	4	2	-
RET	5	2	1
Total	50	57	15

The occupational breakdown of party leaders is shown in Table 25. Whereas the national leadership of the PPF was fairly proletarian in composition, there were no workers at all in the Rhône leadership. Most numerous were the salaried bourgeoisie and lower middle class. Albert Beugras, leader of the PPF, was an engineer trained at the Ecole supérieure de chimie of Mulhouse. Since 1925 he had been employed as an engineer at Rhône-Poulenc in Péage-Roussillon.⁷⁵ These categories are also strongly over-represented among the leaders of the PSF, where senior managers and engineers make up 23% of the total. Most striking of all is the proportion of businessmen in the leadership of the PSF: no less than 37% of the total.⁷⁶ The leadership of the Federation, on the other hand is more balanced. Businessmen are still numerous (22%), but the bourgeoisie as a whole represent 48% compared to 72% of PSF leaders. Were leaders of PSF sub-sections to be excluded, then the difference would be even more marked.

72 Workers, as a geographically mobile group, are usually hard to locate in electoral lists. This difficulty is compounded in the case of the PPF by the imprecision of information in the party press. 28% of the sample consists of workers if all sources are used. If electoral lists alone are used then there are 15% workers and 9% workers or artisans—24% altogether.

73 It might also be noted that if where the right recruited heavily in working class areas, the ruling class and white collar workers were nevertheless over-represented in the committees of those areas. In Vénissieux, where the Federation possessed an important committee, nine out of twenty-eight militants (32%) can be classified as proletarian—a substantial under-representation in relation to the proportion of workers in Vénissieux. The Committee was led by businessmen and wealthy rose-growers. (P. Videlier and B. Bouhet, *Vénissieux d'A à V, 1921-1931*, Lyon, 1983 for the structure of the population of Vénissieux).

74 The Federation sample consists of members of the departmental council; that of the PSF of section presidents and their deputies and sub-section leaders, together with eleven departmental cadres; that of the PPF includes members of the Regional bureau from the Rhône, together with presidents and secretaries of sections.

75 AN Cour de Justice, 4703^J, dossier Beugras; Chaix, op. cit., pp.10-11.

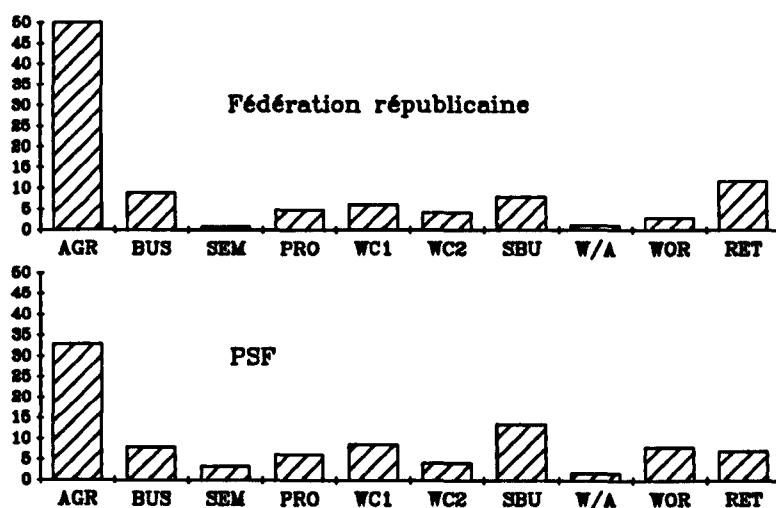
76 Sixteen times their importance in the electorate.

Federation and PSF militants in the agglomeration can also be compared to what little is known of the voters of those parties. The only direct confrontation of PSF and Federation in the agglomeration was in the by-election in the southern part of the 2nd arrondissement in September 1936. Both parties correlate strongly and positively with the bourgeoisie, the PSF more so than the Federation. The Federation outdistanced the PSF only in the two southern districts, where the electorate was more popular.⁷⁷

The Countryside

Outside the agglomeration the peasant base of the Federation contrasts with the more diverse recruitment of the PSF (see Graph 32). Peasants comprise half of the Federation sample, compared to one third of that of the PSF. Because of this disparity PSF militants constitute greater percentages of all the other social groups except businessmen.⁷⁸ The explanation is the appeal of the Federation to businessmen in backward sectors such as the cotton industry of the Monts du Beaujolais.⁷⁹ On the other hand, the PSF does considerably better than the Federation both in the small business category, and among workers. So whilst the PSF in the countryside mobilized relatively few peasant militants, it nonetheless had a more popular appeal than in the agglomeration. In the countryside the PSF resembled in occupational terms the Radicals. But it is impossible to say how many militants had ever been Radical voters or activists—probably very few.

Graph 32: Social class in the countryside



⁷⁷ Bureaux 209 and 210.

⁷⁸ 9% in the Federation, 8% in the PSF.

⁷⁹ When profession is broken down by geographical region, the only area in which the Federation does better than the PSF is the Monts du Beaujolais.

Table 26: Leaders of the Right in the Countryside		
	FR	PSF
AGR	6	11
BUS	5	9
SEM	-	3
PRO	4	9
WC1	2	6
WC2	2	5
SBU	-	2
WOR	1	2
RET	2	2
Total	22	49

In Table 26 PSF section and sub-section leaders are compared to members of the Federation's departmental committee. As before June 1936 the Federation is led largely by non-agricultural individuals. So too is the PSF, for farmers make up only 22% of the total. Yet the proportion of farmers among PSF leaders is much closer to that among party militants as a whole than it is in the Federation, which suggests that peasants in the PSF were more activist. This is perhaps also evidence of the impact of the JAC on the peasantry, and also reminds us of the challenge presented by the PSF to a party which relied on the deference to Church, landowners and village notables.

Businessmen

In terms of scale of enterprise Federation and PSF businessmen cannot be differentiated. The proportion of directors of *sociétés anonymes* is a little higher in the Federation, but in view of the poor quality of the sources, the difference is not significant.⁸⁰ The Federation included a number of big capitalists such as François Balay of Gillet family, whose presence reminds us that the Federation retained residual support among the banking and silk oligarchy which had founded it. We saw in Chapter five, however, that the Federation under Victor Perret was becoming a party of medium sized family firms.

It is evident from surviving party archives that PSF leaders were engaged in a constant search for contributions from business to finance its complex organisation.⁸¹ But too much cannot be read into the sources of business finance, for the PSF received funds from businessmen of diverse opinions, such as the metal trading company Descours & Cabaud, which had in the past subsidised *Action française* and given employment to its members,⁸² and from the engineering employers association.

⁸⁰ 12% compare in the Federation compared to 10% in the PSF.

⁸¹ AN 451 AP 172, Frandaz to de Préval, 22-10-1937: the PSF's liesure organisation (SPES) would be unable to obtain money from party funds because it did not have enough to cover its own needs.

⁸² AN 451 AP 172. In response to a request for money from the PSF's liesure organisation (SPES), the St Etienne businessman Kemlin, suggested an approach to M Vincens-Bougereau of Descours & Cabaud. (Kemlin to Mme de

More significant is the presence in the PSF of representatives of big capital like Henri Doll of the Filatures de Schappe, another firm in which the Gillets had an interest. Doll's presence can also be seen as evidence that elements of the big business elite which had at one time controlled the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation had turned to the PSF. We have already seen Morel-Journal's sympathy for the party.⁸³ A son and a daughter-in-law of Aynard were also connected to the PSF.⁸⁴ There can be little doubt that the same milieu contributed to the finances of the PSF.⁸⁵ Big business was losing interest in the Federation, and in 1936 the Alliance, which had to some extent taken on the role of the Federation, had collapsed. This, together with the anti-parliamentarianism shown in the previous chapter, perhaps explains the turn to the PSF after the shock of June. But we saw in the previous chapter that the support of the business elite for the PSF was discrete and never whole-hearted, all the more so as in 1938 the centre right recovered much of its influence.

The PSF was not then a party of big capital in the way that the Federation had been in the days of Aynard and Isaac. Like the Federation under Perret, the great majority of PSF businessmen were bosses of medium family firms. André Rossignol, director of *Le Volontaire* '36, owned a small dyeing firm. Emile Goirand, Freynet's deputy, helped run the family wholesale paper business. At this point the similarities between PSF and Federation end.

The first major difference was that PSF businessmen were substantially younger: 37% of them were aged forty or less, compared to only 17% of Federation businessmen.⁸⁶ They also lived in different parts of the department. Map 11.07 shows that Federation employers in Lyon preferred the peninsula, with the exception of the 1st arrondissement, the northwestern part of the 7th arrondissement, the industrial suburbs of the agglomeration and the cotton towns of the Monts du Beaujolais. Above all the PSF recruited from the left bank of the Rhône, especially the 6th arrondissement and contiguous parts of Villeurbanne and the 3rd arrondissement. Thus whereas Federation businessmen preferred the districts of the "old bourgeoisie", PSF employers resided in those of the more advanced wing of the ruling class. Perhaps the most revealing opposition is that between the Federation bastion of the Croix Rousse, home of traditional silk manufacturers, and the 6th arrondissement where nearly one quarter of PSF businessmen resided. This opposition is, however, less marked than that between Federation and centre right had been. The PSF had significant support in the

Préval, 11-10-1937. This suggests that the communist *Voix du Peuple*'s suggestion that this firm was subsidising the PSF to the tune of 10,000 francs per month had some truth in it (*Voix du Peuple*, 14-12-1936).

83 *Journal d'Henry Morel-Journal*, 2-5-1938: for example he approved of his daughter's fiancé on the grounds that he was "très PSF". The fiancé owned 250 hectares near Moulins. See also Chapter 11.

84 AN 451 AP 172, Bruyas to de Préval, and carton 278, document of 15-8-1940.

85 Fridenson, op. cit., p. 260. In August 1936 a company was set up to centralize the distribution of funds to conservative parties in the Rhône.

86 The figures for the over-fifties are 35% and 61% respectively.

Businessmen in the PSF
July 1936 to 1939



Map 11.07

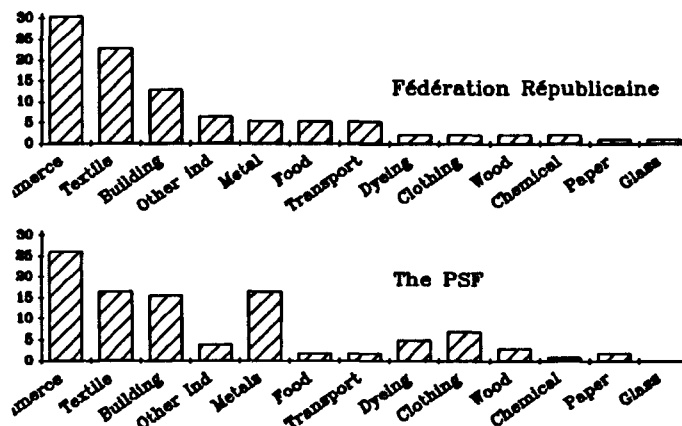
Businessmen In the Federation
July 1936 to 1939



Map 11.08

peninsula, which suggests that the polarization of June had enabled the PSF to widen its recruitment.

Graph 33: Businessmen by sector, July 1936 to 1939



The geographical contrast between the two parties is matched by the sectoral breakdown shown in Graph 33. Employers in the textile industries, both cotton manufacturers and *fabricants de soieries*, preferred the Federation. There are five representatives of the most artisanal of all silk specialities: embroidered silks.⁸⁷ PSF textile manufacturers, on the other hand, include two *gros façonniers*, a category not represented in the Federation, and whose hostility to *fabricants non-usiniers* was longstanding. These employers too had previously favoured the centre right and left of the Federation.

Employers in the metallurgical industry preferred the PSF. It was possible them to see in that party an authoritarian version of the democratic corporatism to which some had adhered in the late 1920s.⁸⁸ The shift of this group from centre right to extreme right is symbolized by the accession of George Villiers to the leadership of the CSIMR in place of Edmond Weitz. The latter had resigned following the strikes of June 1936.⁸⁹ Whereas Weitz had been President of the Alliance, Villiers appears to have seen himself as an arbiter of conservative politics. He financed both the *Françistes*,⁹⁰ and, discretely, the PSF.⁹¹ His flexible attitude was typical of that of big business.

87 Three of them lived in the Croix Rousse, an area where the Federation did much better than the PSF among businessmen. The one such *fabricant* who backed the PSF, Max Dannhauser, was of Austrian origin, and lived in the 6th arrondissement.

88 It is significant that the PSF should retrospectively approve both the abortive corporative projects of 1935, to which both *tisseurs mécanique* and smaller metallurgical firms had been strongly committed.

89 Villiers, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

90 ADR Cour de Justice 1294, dossier Sape.

91 But Villiers contributed to the PSF on condition that the money went only to its social activities, and that his support was kept secret; this suggests that many engineering employers remained faithful to older allegiances. AN 451 AP 172, 18-12-1938.

The PSF had taken over the function of the centre right as a vehicle for those opposed to the business establishment. But this opposition differed in nature from that of the late 1920s. Firstly this was because the liberal-silk hegemony had given way to a wider big business group. Hostility to the business establishment was therefore no longer identified simply with a modern-traditional division, but with medium firms in general. Whereas medium firms in the modern sector turned to the PSF, those in older industries remained with the Federation. After June 1936 big business was blamed by both for the Matignon agreements, and subsequently for being lukewarm in its opposition to the Popular Front. The PSF seemed to reflect their concerns: Rhône-Poulenc, for example, was said by *Le Volontaire* '36 to have avoided the consequences of Popular Front labour legislation by setting up subsidiaries in Britain.⁹²

The dyeing industry is perhaps typical of such conflicts. The bosses of medium dyeing firms were particularly numerous in the PSF. That party's anti-capitalism had a special appeal in a branch where economic crisis had accelerated concentration in the hands of Gillet. In this case the Federation may genuinely have appeared to be a party of big capital, for on its *Comité départemental* sat Jean Vulloid of the second largest dyeing firm in the region, and François Balay of Gillet.⁹³ Gillet, moreover, became the scapegoat for the notoriously bad labour problems in the dyeing industry. Gillet, and other "trusts", were accused of entering into a conspiracy with Marxists in order to destroy "good" capitalists—those who understood the duty of the employer to his workforce.⁹⁴

In other words, it is possible to see in the dyeing industry the classic symptoms of "conservative revolt" against failed elites. The same factors were perhaps also at work in the building industry, where small and medium firms were also in the forefront of industrial struggles. Like dyers, builders were numerous in the PSF. It is also possible to detect the ambiguities of "conservative revolt", for in spite of its anti-capitalism, big firms were also interested in the trades union filial of the PSF, the SPF, as a strike-breaking organization. At Gillet the SPF flourished in the wake of the defeat of a bitter strike in the summer of 1937. More than other employers large building firms saw the PSF as a strike breaking organization. For this reason they also collaborated with the PPF, which took over the organization of North African strike breakers from the patronat.

⁹² *Le Volontaire* '36, 5-3-1937.

⁹³ Both Balay and Vulloid sat on the *Comité départemental* of the party.

⁹⁴ *Le Volontaire* '36, 19-7-1937. The Gillet conflict of 1937, it was argued, "éclaire une fois de plus les vices de notre régime économique-social: des réformes socialistes s'appliquent à un libéralisme capitaliste encore uniquement préoccupé de l'économique. Comment en serait-il autrement dans une société anonyme, gérée de Paris, employant plusieurs milliers d'ouvriers en France et à l'étranger?"

Senior Managers and Engineers

Whereas the proportion of senior managers in the PSF and Federation is fairly similar,⁹⁵ engineers are two and a half times as numerous in the new party.⁹⁶ Engineers were also common in the leadership of the PSF, and in the PPF, which possessed a special engineers' section. The impact of June 1936 on a group influenced by social Catholicism explains the appeal of the PSF to engineers and senior managers.⁹⁷ The result was a group conscious of its own specificity, but simultaneously drawn towards the patronat.⁹⁸

The effects of June 1936 are reflected in the fact that PSF senior managers were more likely than those in the Federation to work in industrial sectors.⁹⁹ Engineers were by nature found mainly in modern industries like chemicals and metallurgy, so there is little difference in the sectoral breakdown of those in the PSF or Federation. But engineers were much more numerous in the former.

Many engineers and managers experienced June 1936 as personal trauma. Albert Beugras at Rhône-Poulenc was personally attacked in CGT tracts and graffiti was painted on his house. He later claimed that in the face of threats to kidnap his children, he had been obliged to flee to Paris, where he made contact with the PPF.¹⁰⁰ The son of Albert Astruc, manager at a large Vaise firm, recalls that one of his earliest memories was of workers marching past the family home, chanting "Les Astruc au poteau!".¹⁰¹ Many PSF and PPF managers and engineers worked in firms at the leading edge of the struggle against the CGT. One example is Paul Lombard, manager of another Gillet artificial fibre concern, Rhodiaceta. This factory acquired symbolic significance when in September 1936 the workforce attempted to run the occupied factory without its managers and engineers.

Yet if engineers and managers were deeply hostile to the CGT, they were also conscious after June that something divided them from the patronat. It is noteworthy that the great bulk of "cadres" in the PSF and PPF defined themselves as engineers rather than managers, for apart from an elite of Polytechnicians engineers rarely at-

95 1.8% in the Federation, compared to 2.2% in of PSF militants. In both parties, nonetheless, they are substantially over-represented.

96 Engineers constitute 5% of the PSF sample, compared to 2% of that of the Federation.

97 New Federation militants were even less likely to be engineers or senior managers—3.2% compared to 4% of all those active in the Federation after June 1936.

98 There is a rather artificial debate on this topic between Luc Boltanski, *The Making of a Class: Cadres in French Society*, Cambridge, 1987, ch. 1 (translated from the French edition of 1982), and I. Kolboom, "Patronat et cadres: la contribution patronale à la formation du groupe des cadres", MS, 1982, pp. 71-95. Kolboom criticizes Boltanski for underestimating the extent to which the cadre movement was encouraged by the patronat. In fact Boltanski's argument allows for a subtle interplay of ideological traditions, capital-labour conflict and changes in the nature of the enterprise. A better target for Kolboom would have been Marc Maurice, op. cit., who argues for an automatic connection between bureaucratization of the enterprise, intensification of labour-capital conflict, and an ideology of the third way.

99 Federation senior managers tended to work in non-industrial sectors such as the press and banking.

100 AN Cour de Justice 516 4703³, Dossier Beugras-Célor; *Chaix*, op. cit., 9-11. Marie Chaix's novel is based on her father's memoirs, written whilst awaiting trial.

101 Interview with Dr. Roger Astruc, 1987. This recollection is authenticated by reports in the *Nouvelliste* of agitation in Vaise at this time: "La ville à été en effet, absolument livrée aux masses du Front Populaire [...] Les milliers de poings levés, et les incessants cris de «à mort! au poteau!» en dit assez long sur l'esprit qui animent les manifestants" (*Nouvelliste*, 15-7-1936).

tained the summits of managerial responsibility.¹⁰² The great majority of engineers were at one remove from the patronat. Some saw themselves as having been abandoned by their employers, as “frustrated collaborators” to use Ingo Kolboom’s expression. Albert Beugras believed that the cowardice of his employers had led to the victory of the CGT: the workers in his department had refused to strike, but in the end the employers gave in and Beugras was sent on holiday.¹⁰³

The professional consciousness of engineers and managers had been sharpened in the early 1930s by a struggle to protect their profession from overcrowding.¹⁰⁴ Often this struggle had led to involvement in the dominant engineers organization, USIC. Canat de Chizy had at one time been its President. Here they had been exposed to social Catholic doctrine. From this source engineers took a tripartite model of society which after June 1936 enabled them to make sense of their struggle against communism and employers and permitted them to conclude that they were uniquely placed to reconcile bosses and workers. The theme of the twin combat against communism and employers, held responsible for the upheaval of June 1936, is prominent in many of Beugras’s articles in the PPF press.¹⁰⁵ Beugras’s middle way was symbolic, however, for as a full-time activist in the PPF he continued to receive his salary from Rhône-Poulenc.¹⁰⁶ Often engineers and managers believed that they knew better than their employers on matters other than labour relations. Canat de Chizy, company secretary of the Société Lyonnaise du textile, was a defender of the 1935 entente project for the silk industry, seeing it as a means for engineers to make their voices heard.¹⁰⁷ The prominence of textile industry managers and engineers in the PSF,¹⁰⁸ is perhaps explained by this issue, as well as by the extent of industrial conflict in that industry.

The position of engineers and senior managers has many similarities with that of the businessmen who supported the PSF. Here too it is possible to detect a mobilization of rank and file conservatives against failed leaders.

The Liberal Professions and students

The liberal professions and students are more numerous in the PSF (6%) than the Federation (4%), though in both parties they are substantially over-represented in relation to the electorate as a whole. The liberal professions are the only occupational

102 A Grelon, “La Profession d’ingénieur dans les années trente”, in Grelon (ed.), *Les Ingénieurs de la crise*, Paris, 1986, pp. 7-32. An example of an “elite” engineer is Canat de Chizy. As company secretary of a large artificial fibre firm, he occupied a very senior position. He was, moreover, the son of an Inspector of Finance and member of a wealthy family with connections to the Gillet’s. (A. Hamon, *Les Maîtres de la France*).

103 Chaix, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

104 Grelon, op. cit., pp. 7-26.

105 Chaix, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

106 AN Cour de Justice 516 4703³, Dossier Beugras-Célor.

107 According to Morel-Journel, Canat de Chizy had been stirring up trouble against Morel-Journel et Cie. in the Société lyonnaise du textil. *Journal d’Henry Morel-Journel*, 29-11-1935.

108 Five out of thirteen for whom profession is known, compared to only one out of eleven in the Federation. The leader of the PSF’s Neuville section, Paul Cuzin, was manager of Textiles du Rhône, a firm producing rayon.

group in which there is a significant difference in the geographical origins of the supporters of Federation and PSF. In the former 68% had been born in the agglomeration, in the latter only 35%. Four out of five of those supporting the PPF had also been born outside the agglomeration. This difference is all the more important in view of the fact that PSF supporters were much younger: 47% were aged forty or less, compared to 22% in the Federation. These differences are only partially explained by the greater number of students in the PSF sample.

The most probable explanation is the over-crowding of the professions in the 1930s.¹⁰⁹ Difficulties were perhaps greatest among those without connections in the city. Law students opposed measures enabling solicitors' clerks to embark on legal studies even though they did not possess the baccalaureate. Many demanded corporate regulation of professions. It is therefore significant that whereas the Federation included a greater proportion of lawyers, a profession which was already self-regulated, the PSF comprised a higher proportion of doctors, the group in which demands for a professional body were greatest.¹¹⁰ Once again the PSF is the party of the "anti-establishment bourgeoisie".

Small business

The PSF was one of many groups after June 1936 which claimed to express the discontent of the *classes moyennes*. *Classes moyennes* discourse had many functions. In the present context what is important is that it was designed to achieve the old conservative goal of winning over the self-employed clientele of the Radicals. To this end the PSF retained its links with the radical wing of the small shopkeeper movement, the UF. July 1936 Marcel Perdriel was reported by the police to have been involved, along with three royalists, in the creation of a group of small businessmen able to combat any renewal of strike activity.¹¹¹ In mid-1937 it was reported that the PSF was ready to create its own small shopkeeper organization.¹¹²

It is unlikely that the PSF was more successful in winning over small business than any other conservative party had been. In April 1937 the Prefect remarked on the failure of efforts, deriving from all parts of the political chessboard, to latch onto the discontent of the lower-middle class. Only a small minority, thanks to opposition to the Forty Hours Law, had been attracted to the PSF.¹¹³ The great bulk of small businessmen remained faithful to the Radicals. Although the Radicals had lost votes to right and left in 1936, the *cantonales* of October 1937 showed that the party had

¹⁰⁹ See chapter nine.

¹¹⁰ 27% of Federation professionals were lawyers, compared to 22% of those in the PSF. The figures for doctors were 24% and 35% respectively.

¹¹¹ ADR 4m 244, campagnes alarmistes, September 1936.

¹¹² ADR 4m 236, 24-7-1934.

¹¹³ ADR 4m 236, 24-4-1937.

staged something of a recovery, as it did nationally in 1937 and 1938. The PSF's projected small business syndicate never materialized.

It is true that the PSF included a greater proportion of small businessmen than the Federation——12% compared to 8% in the latter. But since the proportion of the self-employed in the right as a whole remained stable at 10%, it must be suspected that the majority of PSF small businessmen had previously been sympathizers of the Parliamentary right. It is true that in the countryside small businessmen are over-represented in the PSF, and that the social profile of the PSF resembles that of the Radicals.¹¹⁴ But even here, with the possible exception of the mountains, most militants were of conservative background. It is therefore essential to differentiate small business support for the Federation and PSF.

First, the Federation includes more silk weavers and practitioners of declining rural trades such as harness making.¹¹⁵ More common in the PSF were new trades such radio repairers and garage owners. This is partly a function of the greater age of Federation militants. But the traditionalist rhetoric of the Federation appears to have had some impact on small business.

More important is the contrasting geographical implantation of small businessmen in the two parties. Whereas the Federation won support from small business in the 7th arrondissement and the proletarian banlieu, the PSF was strong in the bourgeois 2nd and 6th arrondissements. Social and political polarization explains this contrast.

A favoured tactic of anti-fascists in left-dominated districts was to boycott PSF traders. One target was the pharmacist Jean Knersynski. As a member of the *Croix de Feu* Knersynski had been involved in several violent incidents.¹¹⁶ He now led the PSF security service, the *Equipes volantes de propagande* (EVP), in the 5th arrondissement. On 18 September 1936 a tract urging the boycott of three local traders, including Knersynski, was distributed. A crowd of perhaps 1,200 surrounded his shop.¹¹⁷ Intimidation may have worked, for in the following year Knersynski left Lyon.¹¹⁸ It is not surprising that small traders in such areas were reluctant to commit themselves to the PSF.

Shopkeepers were much more likely to join the PSF in central areas where the PSF was much stronger. This emphasizes the extent to which the PSF was the expression and agent of the politicization of entire *quartier's*——a kind of state within a

114 Shopkeepers and small traders constitute 8% and 14% of Federation and PSF militants respectively. The difference is all the more striking when it is remembered that the Federation sample does not include the host of peasant mayors who supported the Federation during electoral campaigns.

115 In the Croix-Rousse the party included two artisan weavers aged seventy-five and ninety-six in 1938.

116 For example at Décines in the autumn of 1935.

117 *Nouveau journal*, 19-9-1936. The tract read "Travailleurs vaisois, n'oubliez pas que le pharmacien Knerzynsky, 3, rue Masyrak, est Croix de Feu. Un commerçant Croix de Feu, boycottez-le".

118 We know this because he was removed from the electoral register in 1938.

state.¹¹⁹ *Le volontaire* '36, unlike that of the Federation, carried two pages of *maisons recommandées*, where PSF adherents were assured of a welcome from like-minded traders.¹²⁰

Whilst it is certain that the great bulk of self-employed sympathizers of the PSF had conservative backgrounds, the possibility that a minority came from Radicalism should not be discounted. We have also seen that in the canton of St Laurent de Chamousset the Radical electorate preferred the PSF to the Federation. Given the dependence of rural radicalism in such areas on small shopkeepers and artisans it is possible that some Radical small traders joined the PSF. PSF propaganda in this area was highly populist in tone. Two of the PSF militants interviewed claimed that their fathers had voted for the Radicals. Both participated in the activities of the EVP, a body in which youthful petty bourgeois males were numerous, and where a pseudo-Jacobin atmosphere reigned.¹²¹ Where the PSF did win Radical supporters, they reinforced the anti-establishment ethos of the PSF.

White Collar Workers

In absolute terms white collar workers constitute the largest social group in all three parties: 24% of PPF militants; 25% in the Federation and 30% in the PSF.¹²² The PSF trades union, the SPF, was also largely a movement of white collar workers. There is nothing new in the reliance of conservative parties upon private sector white collar workers for their popular constituencies. But under the surface some complex changes had taken place. The background is the contrast between the expansion of Catholic trades unionism and the decline of Christian democracy, and the growing gap between CFTC leaders and a pro-PSF rank and file. The evidence for the PSF-CFTC link lies in the recruitment of the PSF in groups where the CFTC had traditionally been strong.

First, PSF white collar workers were relatively young.¹²³ Second, like PDP and CFTC supporters they lived mainly in the bourgeois and petty bourgeois centre of Lyon. Higher grade white collar workers were recruited from the bourgeois 2nd, 5th and 6th arrondissements and from western residential suburbs. Lower grade employees resided in these same areas, but also in the 3rd. This latter area was one where the PSF as a whole was not strong, but where the PDP had been well implanted. Only where the progress of the PSF was dependent upon the patronal counter-offensive did the PSF break out of its confinement in the central areas of Lyon.¹²⁴

119 cf Nord, op. cit., passim on the importance of *quartier* to Parisian shopkeepers in the 1880s and 1890s.

120 In 1937 the party produced a directory of sympathetic traders. Bruno Beguet, op. cit., pp. 93-5, analysed the residence of traders advertising in *le Volontaire* '36, finding that they lived mainly in the centre of the city.

121 See Chapter 12.

122 By white collar workers in this section I mean both higher and lower grade workers, together with the white collar workers in the PTT, OTL and PLM sometimes classed separately as "public services".

123 33% of Federation white collar workers were aged forty or less, compared to 55% of those backing the PSF.

124 See page (?).

The Federation, on the other hand, gained its white collar support from those areas where the *Oeuvre des cercles* was strong, the 4th and 7th, and among lower grade workers resident in the suburbs. The importance of paternalist Catholicism is underlined by the fact that the minority of silk employees who backed the Federation lived mainly in the Croix Rousse, where the *Corporation des employés de soieries* had most of its members. Here the paternalism of the merchant manufacturing wing of the silk industry, symbolized by the Perret-Gruffaz axis, reinforced religious ties.

Third, inevitably for a movement implanted largely in the centre of Lyon, the PSF recruited mainly from medium and small enterprises, often commercial in nature.¹²⁵ The Federation in contrast had quite substantial support in the large chemical and metallurgical firms in the suburbs of the agglomeration, such as Rhône-Poulenc and Saint Gobain.¹²⁶ Here too the PSF resembled the CFTC. Catholic syndicates had been based on the parishes rather than on individual enterprises, thereby enabling them to get around the hostility of small and medium firms to unions. Where the PSF differed from the CFTC was in its near absence from the large banks and department stores of the centre, where the CFTC possessed a minority of supporters. Federation members were more common in both.¹²⁷ The relative weakness of the PSF in the *grands magasins* and banks could be due to the fact that PSF militants there devoted themselves to the SPF, which was relatively successful in the Grand Bazaar and Crédit lyonnaise in particular.¹²⁸ But the SPF were never very strong, even here, making little impression in delegate elections. A more plausible explanation is that in large concerns CFTC adherents possessed greater awareness of the distinctive principles of the CFTC, which prevented them from turning to the PSF. Furthermore, rivalry with the CGT limited the success of the SPF, for it could be seen as dividing anti-communist forces.¹²⁹

The fact that the PSF recruited best in medium and small business cannot be seen simply as evidence of manipulation by employers. We shall see that where there was such manipulation it usually took place in larger firms. Rather the appeal of the PSF to white collar workers should be seen in the context of a partial breakdown of

125 Amongst higher grade workers the PSF recruited more travelling salesmen, while the Federation recruited more bookkeepers a group which is more industrial in character.

126 There were no PSF, but four Federation employees in these two firms. As we shall see there were also several Federation workers in the same firms.

127 There were four Federation militants working in department stores (one each at Galeries Lafayette and Deux Passages, and two at Grand Bazaar), while one PSF militant worked at Bon Marché.

1.3% of all Federation adherents in the department worked in the large banks, compared to 1% of PSF militants. 10 and 8 individuals respectively. Of the six Federation militants whose place of work is known, four worked at Credit Lyonnais, the other two at small banks. No PSF member is known to have worked in a large bank.

128 The names and places of work of SPF militants come partly from Bruno Béguet who was kind enough to lend me the fiches on which his own excellent work had been based, and partly from my own researches, particularly in ADR 3u (Parquet de Lyon) 316, 1845 and 2022, and from the SPF Press. The places of work of the nine known leaders of the *SPF Banque et Bourse* are probably representative of PSF strength. Four were employed by Credit Lyonnaise, five by smaller banks.

129 This perhaps explains why CFTC members deserted to the SPF only in smaller firms where the CGT was not a direct threat. For example in the employees section of the Tréfileries du Rhône (Bocuze), where there were thirty voters, the SPF just managed to evict the sitting CFTC delegates.

paternalism in medium and small firms due to the bureaucratization of white collar work, growth of leisure, the emergence of a popular parish sociability, and the influence of social Catholics within that network. This created a potential for conflict in such firms, which was accentuated by the wide appeal of the reforms of the Popular Front. The proximity of employer and employee in smaller firms evoked the possibility of class collaboration. The CFTC preached its necessity yet at the same time defended social reforms to which the patronat were deeply hostile. Hence the turn to the corporatism of the PSF, a system which promised to both protect special interests yet to resolve conflict not so much by negotiation as in the CFTC version, but by spiriting it away through an appeal to the national interest and strong leadership.

The importance of corporatism to PSF white collar workers is confirmed by PSF recruitment in two groups which had shown an interest in corporatism in the early 1930s. Travelling salesmen had campaigned through the CFTC for a statute regulating their conditions of employment, an issue which had brought them into conflict with employers.¹³⁰ The issue was taken up by the PSF.¹³¹ The second group were white collar workers in the silk industry, who are almost three times more numerous in the PSF than the Federation.¹³² Their interest in corporatism is confirmed also by the fact that the first issue of the bulletin of the SPF silk union was composed largely of a defence of the failed entente in the silk industry.¹³³

Finally, a word about white collar support for the PPF. As far as it is possible to tell from a small sample the PPF recruited from almost the same milieu as the PSF. White collar workers in the two parties are roughly similar in age, geographical origins and in their residence in the bourgeois areas of the city. Where the parties differ is firstly in the greater appeal of the PPF to higher grade employees, and secondly in the presence of a significant white collar presence in working class areas, especially Villeurbanne. Social polarization is again the best explanation, for supervisory personnel in proletarian suburbs must often have experienced isolation and perhaps attacks from communists.

This might have been all the more galling because there is evidence that some militants had experienced disappointment in their careers.¹³⁴ The father of René Mazot had been killed in the Great War. Young René attended one of the *Lycée Ampère*, perhaps the best in Lyon, but left at age fifteen without taking the baccalaureate, perhaps because he was an orphan. He worked in several white collar jobs then in 1935

¹³⁰ Travelling salesmen make up 39% of the higher grade white collar workers in the PSF compared to 26% in the Federation.

¹³¹ *Volontaire* '36, 17-9-1937.

¹³² The actual figures are 1% of all adherents in the Federation, 2.7% in the Federation. Most of these were lower grade workers. Such employees are relatively easy to identify because in many gave their profession in electoral or census registers as "employé de soieries".

¹³³ *SPF des Ouvriers et employés de soieries*, No. 2, 7-9-1936.

¹³⁴ The source is interrogations of PPF members after the liberation. Obviously people who risked the death penalty had good reason to attribute their politics to personal misfortune. But if we stick to the facts of education and employment history there does seem to be truth in many of the stories. Sometimes they are corroborated.

went to work for another future PPF militant Louis Chazal in his refrigeration repair business. But within two years the firm had collapsed. Just before this happened both men had joined the PPF. Mazot then found work at Citroën garages, a firm which employed other militants of the far right.¹³⁵

Workers

The same factors which have been invoked to explain the recruitment of conservative white collar workers can be applied to working class supporters. Federation workers lived in the 4th and 7th arrondissements and in suburbs like Vénissieux. They worked in large chemical and metallurgical enterprises. PSF workers were younger, resided in areas where there was a strong bourgeois presence, as well as the third with its PDP past, and worked mainly in small and medium firms. Indeed, half a dozen PSF workers were employed in small businesses by their fathers. One PSF militant was a gardener on the Gillet estate at Bully.¹³⁶ This does not, however, mean that PSF workers were in any simple sense subject to paternalism. The arguments developed in connection with white collar workers apply here too.¹³⁷

What is perhaps more interesting is the decline in the strength of the right as a whole in proletarian suburbs after June 1936.¹³⁸ If the right maintained its support in the working class, it was because of the recruitment of workers in the centre of the city by the PSF. The PPF did relatively well in the suburbs, especially Villeurbanne, but PPF militants were not numerous. Yet the right did not decline electorally after 1936.¹³⁹ Again the impact of social polarization upon the popular constituency of the right can be invoked to resolve this paradox.

The counterpart of the dense implantation of the PSF in the centre of the city was an intense popular consciousness in working class suburbs. Since the *cantonales* of 1934 the Communists had made spectacular electoral gains in the south eastern suburbs.¹⁴⁰ According to Antoine Prost a greater proportion of the workforce in the Rhône was unionised than in any other department.¹⁴¹ In such an ambience even quarrels between neighbours were politicized. This happened in Villeurbanne in the summer of 1937 when a communist municipal employee of Spanish origin was shot

135 ADR Cour de Justice, 635. Another PPF member, Jean Dalla Chiera had attended the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Lyon, but emerged without a diploma. Until January 1936 he had been employed as bookkeeper at Berliet. After leaving this job he set up as a painter and decorator, but soon found waged work in the building industry (AN Cour de Justice de la Seine, 514 4703⁴).

136 1.1% of PSF militants were employed in services; 0.4% of Federation sympathizers.

137 See page 336.

138 See page 318.

139 In the legislative elections of 1936 the right gained 18.7% of votes cast. In the local elections of October 1937 the combined vote of the PSF and PPF was 18.5% of voters. The poll in the latter was remarkably high for a cantonal election.

140 The municipalities of several suburban communes, including Villeurbanne, Vénissieux and Bron had fallen to the communists in 1935. In 1936 communists had won the seats of Villeurbanne (canton) and the working class parts of the 7th arrondissement.

141 Prost, op. cit., p. His figures are a little suspect since they are based on partially corrected, but still unreliable, data on the active population in the 1936 census. But fraud went undetected in many other cities. There can be little doubt that levels of unionization were elevated in France.

dead by a reputedly fascist worker employed in an artificial fibre factory. According to the left several thousand people followed the coffin.¹⁴² Meanwhile the left's campaign against the extreme right continued on the streets. In Vaise, known for its "village spirit", hostility to the PSF was particularly marked.¹⁴³ In September 1936 a revival of PSF motorcades caused the left to organize street patrols in the district. The police reported that purchases of hand guns had been very numerous.¹⁴⁴ Pressure to conform was equally strong in the factories. Donations to collections for strikers were seen as a symbol of adhesion to the popular cause.¹⁴⁵ The "conduite de Grenoble", which involved ritual humiliation by female workers, was employed on several occasions against SPF members.¹⁴⁶

Incidents of this kind are a rich source for the study of working class culture. But the essential point here is that community pressure made it difficult for the right to organize. This is perhaps why it was the less activist Federation which remained best-implanted in the *banlieu*, rather than the PSF. PSF and SPF were able to organize only where they fastened onto the counter-offensive of the employers. In the left wing press there were frequent accusations of employer pressure to join the PPF and PSF.¹⁴⁷ That such pressure was sometimes real is confirmed a letter of 1941, in which François Peissel spoke of Paul Cuzin, manager of Textiles du Rhône, as "un homme intelligent et complet, [qui] a milité ardemment au PSF écartant de tout embauchage ce qui ne donnaient pas leur adhésion à ce parti".¹⁴⁸ Such was the case in the Gillet dyeing factories.¹⁴⁹ After the failed strike of 1937 the SPF made quite significant gains in delegate elections in Gillet factories. At the Société Lyonnaise de textiles Canat de Chizy, the company secretary, led a section of the SPF.¹⁵⁰

It is interesting to look at the sociology of the PPF in the light of social polarization. The sample is small, but the differences with the PSF and Federation are

142 All Lyon dailies, 17-8-1937 and ff. The police, unlike the press, saw this as principally a quarrel between neighbours, but admitted that this was impossible to prove (ADR 4m 236, 18-8-1937). The man arrested for the crime received only a light sentence for carrying a prohibited arm: "un verdict de classe" was the opinion of the PCF (ADR 4m 236, January 1938). Local shopkeepers gave generously to a collection for his family.

143 AN 451 AP 172: a PSF report on statead that "Vaise se présent moins sous la forme de la grande banlieu industrielle, qu'avec un esprit de grande village, bien particulier, buté déformé en grande majorité [...]". Albert Astruc, PSF president in Vaise, had been on the receiving end of popular discontent

144 All Lyon papers, 13-20 September 1936.

145 BB¹⁸ 3063, 22-7-1937, 29-7-1937.

146 BB¹⁸ 3063, 22-7-1937, 8-10-1937. At Pierre Bénite in July 1937 the victim was surrounded by a crowd of 400 women, forced off his bicycle, and made to walk three kilometres to the town hall of Pierre Benite, all the time insulted by the crowd. The police, upon rescuing him, remarked on the "extreme state of nervous depression into which he had fallen". These incidents came at a time when the tide was clearly turning against the left in industrial struggles. In June the police had evacuated the occupied Gillet factories in Villeurbanne with almost no opposition. At the level of popular culture working class resistance was more effective.

147 Bruno Beguet, op. cit., p. 164, quote several examples from the communist *Voix du Peuple*. They refer mostly to Gillet, Rhodiaceta and Rhône-Poulenc. For example 3-10-1936, Rhône-Poulenc: "forte pression de la personnel maîtrise. Si l'adhésion avait été libre il n'y auraient certainement pas tant de syndiqués professionnels".

148 ADR 4m Conseils municipaux, Neuville carton, Peissel to Angeli, 10-2-1941. Peissel advised Prefect Angeli to choose Cuzin as mayor of Neuville on these grounds.

149 Gillet in fact was the common denominator in many such firms: the Société Lyonnaise du Textile, the Textiles du Rhône, Rhodiaceta and Rhône-Poulenc. In Rhodiaceta, once again following the defeat of a strike, the CFTC had its greatest success of all.

150 ADR, 3u 316 parquet de Lyon.

striking. Working class militants in the PPF were markedly younger, and generally immigrants: 66% of PPF workers were aged forty or less; only two out of fourteen had been born in the agglomeration. Several had been born outside France.¹⁵¹ Perhaps typical was Henri Carton. Aged twenty-eight in 1938, he had left his birthplace at Miribel (Ain) after leaving school in 1924. He worked in a number of firms in Villeurbanne. Then after a stay in Marseille, followed by his military service, he returned to Villeurbanne at the end of 1933 to work for the dyeing firm, Nombret-Gailard. Carton joined the PPF on its foundation, rapidly becoming secretary of the Villeurbanne section.¹⁵² There is evidence too that some PPF workers were set off from their fellows by their education. Jean David was the offspring of primary school teachers in the Aube. He had taken the first part of the baccalaureate, yet became a worker-dyer at Vulloid-Ancel and eventually foreman in his brother's dyeing establishment.¹⁵³

It is reasonable to conclude that PPF militants were less integrated into existing associative networks. They would perhaps have been outside of the networks from which the FR and PSF recruited in the centre of the city. In the suburbs immigrants of a conservative disposition would perhaps have felt more strongly still their exclusion from the popular culture which sustained the left. Given the strength of communist hostility to Doriot's movement, PPF militants would have been in a highly exposed position in the suburbs. Some were indeed the victims of physical violence.¹⁵⁴ In such circumstances it is perhaps inevitable that only the young minority should take the risk of active involvement in the PPF.

None of this means that working class conservatism in the suburbs was an artificial creature, dependent upon marginals and stooges of the bosses. Rather, public expression of conservative opinion became difficult. Furthermore, like workers and white collar workers in the centre of the city they were in a paradoxical position. On the one hand they were often favourable to the reforms of the Popular Front, and potentially divided from conservative leaders.¹⁵⁵ On the other their isolation in a sea of communism reinforced the intensity with which conservative opinions were held. Hence the appeal of movements which claimed to be simultaneously anti-communist and protective of working class interests. As the prefect put it, the growth of the SPF

151 ADR Cour de Justice, 1576. One such was Armand Mamanti, who had been born at Piombino in Italy in 1902. He arrived in Villeurbanne aged twenty-two in 1924, and found a job in a biscuit factory in Villeurbanne. Having risen to the position of foreman in 1928, Mamanti was naturalized in 1935. He joined the PPF in 1936 or 1937, soon becoming president of the Villeurbanne section. He subsequently joined the LVF, in order, he said, to check on living conditions in Russia. He was executed in 1946.

152 ADR Cour de Justice, 1454.

153 ADR Cour de Justice du Rhône, 1912. Another example was Fernand Sape. Although by 1936 he devoted himself full-time to political activism and journalism, Sape had been a print worker. The son of a sexton, and an obviously intelligent individual, Sape's education had been ruined by illness (ADR Cour de Justice du Rhône, 1294).

154 For example in July 1937 a young PPF member was beaten up on his way home from a meeting by two men who had followed him in a van (*Nouvelliste*, 23-7-1937).

155 Even the SPF supported in principle the idea of the forty hour week, and in some cases tried to claim the credit for its implementation.

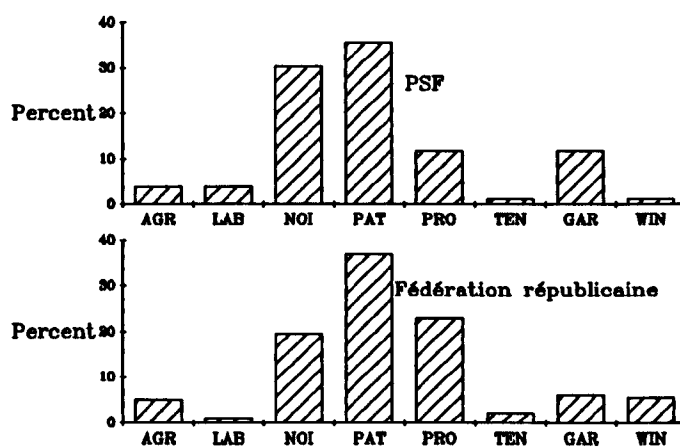
was obviously favoured by certain employers, but benefited also from a real disillusion with the Popular Front.¹⁵⁶

The Peasantry

In the previous chapter the growth of the *Croix de Feu* in the countryside was related to the development of social Catholicism, in particular of the JAC. Of course, since even the earliest JAC adherents would still have been in their twenties in 1936 to 1939, the bulk of PSF militants would not have come directly into contact with that movement. Yet they might well have been associated with the precursors of the JAC, the *Groupes d'études rurales*, and in any case JAC ideas were part of a wider current.

With this in view it is not surprising that peasant militants of the PSF were overwhelmingly from the younger generation. Whereas 38% of PSF militants were aged forty or less, only 18% of Federation supporters fall into this category. Moreover, no less than 41% of Federation peasant sympathizers were aged over sixty, a reflection of the party's reliance upon the heads of established peasant families. PSF militants are also distinguished by the fact that they were less likely to have been born in the commune in which they lived.

Graph 34: Peasants in the PSF and Federation, July 1936 1939¹⁵⁷



The main difference in regional implantation is that the Federation does better than the PSF in the wine growing Beaujolais. Rising wine prices could explain why in spite of a promising beginning by the *Croix de Feu* the PSF made little headway in that area. The greater influence of big landowners in this area and their alliance with the Church must also be taken into account. Such conditions did not favour radical

¹⁵⁶ ADR 4m 236, February 1938.

¹⁵⁷ Key: LAB = farm labourer, NOI = Farmer, no other indication, PAT = "cultivateur (patron)", PRO = proprietor, TEN = tenant, GAR = market gardener etc, WIN = wine grower.

conservatism any more than they had favoured the development of the JAC. Only in the southern part of the wine growing region, where big landowners were less numerous, did the PSF make progress. Elsewhere the pattern of peasant support matches implantation of the JAC on the plateau and in the mountains.

More detailed evidence of the nature of peasant support is lacking. Graph 34 shows the rather scanty information which can be gleaned from electoral and census lists. That the PSF includes more whose occupation is given simply as "cultivateur", without any further indication of status reflects their comparative youth. The appellations "cultivateur (patron)" and "cultivateur (propriétaire)" were reserved for heads of families. The same applies to farm labourers, better represented in the PSF because many "domestiques" were young men working with neighbours or relatives whilst awaiting their inheritances.

As before June 1936 tenants are greatly underrepresented. Whether this means that tenants were not involved in politics, or that they simply did not record their status in the census is impossible to say. There can, however, be no doubt that it was peasant proprietors or their sons who took the lead in both parties. The recruitment of the PSF among the sons of proprietors, together with its relative failure to interest wine growers, is consistent with what is known of the JAC. Also significant is the greater proportion of market gardeners in the PSF. Market gardeners had their own section in the JAC. They also favoured corporatist regulation of their profession, for vegetable prices had been driven down by conversion of fruit producers to vegetable production as a result of the glut in their own market.

Finally, the Federation includes more large landowners. Figures such as Guy de Saint-Laumer, the Comte Vivien de Lescure and the Marquis de Fenoyl, moreover, played a more visible rôle in the Federation. The greater proportion of Federation militants who gave their occupation as "agriculteur" could be a reflection of their age, but perhaps also indicates that the individuals concerned were non-working farmers.¹⁵⁸

On balance long-term changes in social relations together with short-term political crisis are at least as important as economic difficulties in explaining the advance of the PSF among the peasantry. Where the PSF was the product of the sorts of social and ideological changes which had also favoured the development of the JAC, the Federation continued to be dominated by an elderly agricultural notability, led by large landowners in alliance with relatively prosperous elderly peasant proprietors.

¹⁵⁸ On the other hand, the PSF, unlike the Federation, does include two farmers who employed four and five live-in agricultural labourers.

Conclusion

To sum up, the background of PSF militants needs to be understood in the dual context of the struggle for hegemony within the Lyonnais right and of extreme social polarization. The PSF can be seen as a movement of revolt against the political, social and economic leaders of conservatism at a time of deep crisis within the bourgeoisie, in its relations with the conservative masses, and with the labour movement. That the PSF represented a right wing movement is suggested by the conservative origins of the great majority of PSF militants and voters, and the over-representation in the party of the bourgeoisie, white collar workers and peasants. That the PSF can also be seen as a radical conservative movement is supported by the comparative youthfulness of its adherents; the existence of continuities with the geographical implantation of the PDP and lay centre right, and its appeal to "anti-establishment" groups such as bosses of family firms, especially in the engineering industry, engineers, the constituency of the CFTC, and young peasant proprietors or their sons influenced by the JAC. The evidence for placing the PSF in the context of extreme social and political polarization derives from the concentration of a large membership in the bourgeois and petty bourgeois centre of the city.

The concept of conservative revolt can also be applied to the PPF. It was conservative because it had originated in the collapse of existing groupings of the extreme right, because of the over-representation of bourgeois and petty bourgeois groups in its ranks, and because of its better implantation in bourgeois areas of the city. It was radical in the extreme youth of its members, the near absence of businessmen, and the presence of a relatively high proportion of workers in its ranks. The PPF also appealed to newly self-conscious sections of the bourgeoisie, such as engineers and managers. The PPF too was a product of social polarization, for recent arrivals in the city were more likely to be excluded from existing political networks. Some militants had suffered personally from the upheavals of June 1936.

The Federation became a party of elderly men, dominated by landowners, often aristocratic, the merchant manufacturing bourgeoisie, Lyon-born lawyers and doctors. Faced with the desertion of large sections of the bourgeoisie, and suffering too from the hostile political atmosphere in the proletarian suburbs of the *banlieu*, it was best able to maintain a popular constituency where it could rely on Parish social circles.

In the intra-conservative conflicts which followed June 1936 the PSF tended to identify the Federation with the "establishment". Only in a sense was this true, for in fact the Federation represented a marginalized and declining section of the conservative bloc, while some of the real business establishment of Lyon hesitated between centre right and PSF. The Federation's view of the PSF emerges from a description of the PSF militants who broke up a Federation meeting in February 1938:

Cette jeunesse dorée qui à troqué ses gants-crème et veston bordés pour la veste de cuir et la casquette rabattue, explose en hués délirantes, en cris de bêtes fauves. [...] Les hommes de la veste de cuir se jettent comme des sauvages sur toute ce qui peut avoir de près ou de loin quelque allure bourgeois. La grande majorité de ses énergumène ce sont les bourgeois, vous le pensez bien! mais des bourgeois honteux... toujours l'honneur et la propreté!¹⁵⁹

In spite of its relatively broad recruitment the Federation saw itself as the expression an established bourgeois elite, challenged by an upstart movement drawn essentially from the same milieu. There is much truth in this, for the PSF was clearly not the plebeian movement it claimed to be. But there is more to it than this, for it has been shown that the anti-establishment claims of the PSF corresponded in a some ways to reality. Unable to admit ideological, social or economic cleavages in the bourgeoisie, the Federation attributed the challenge of the PSF to moral turpitude. This points again to the fact that the extreme right's claim to represent the "people" was in some senses a symbolic one, which needs to be analyzed politically and ideologically.

¹⁵⁹ *Union républicaine*, 27-2-1938.

Chapter twelve

The PSF: from paramilitarism to electoralism?

Pierre Milza, following René Rémond, sees the PSF as a prefiguration of the modern Gaullist movement: “la première grande formation moderne de la droite française”. It was a mass “inter-class party, resolutely conservative and electoralist.”¹ In a similar vein William Irvine argues that the hostility of the *Fédération républicaine* to the PSF was due to the electoral threat posed to a notable party by one which disposed of modern means of organization.² In his “dissenting interpretation” of the *Croix de Feu* Robert Soucy argues that the conversion of the PSF to Republicanism was opportunistic. Fearful of dissolution and of association with the German enemy, La Rocque rejected the fascist label and feigned a commitment to the Republic. But in the new circumstances of June 1940 he eagerly rallied to Pétain.³

Robert Soucy is correct to argue that the PSF was forced by the events of June 1936 to move away from fascism. But his contention that La Rocque's support for Vichy shows his conversion to electoralism to have been insincere is dubious. The proposition is unhistorical and wholly unfalsifiable. Had France not been defeated in 1940, the PSF might just have easily become a conventional conservative party. The view adopted here is that the PSF slowly shook off its fascist past — this is most evident in the gradual abandonment of paramilitarism — yet it remained authoritarian.

The nature of conservative politics in this period was determined by contradictory pressures. The conditions in which a fascist party might have flourished still existed. The two great problems which had divided the right since the nineteenth century—religion and attitudes to industrialization—persisted and were aggravated by continuation of the economic crisis. The right remained divided. The old parties were perceived to have failed in domestic and international politics. Indeed, the events of June 1936 further discredited political and business leaders, while Popular Front reforms increased tensions within the right. These stress zones were all the more serious because the victory of the Popular Front, the strikes and the renewal of the German threat made the right more conscious of the need for national unity. Yet in spite of this crisis fascism as a political option had been dealt a series of blows in 1935 and 1936 from which it never recovered. It had in any case not been inevitable that the crisis should produce a fascist regime or even movement.

For these reasons the PSF retained its anti-establishment stance and remained an authoritarian movement. But its authoritarianism was more concerned with the defence of bourgeois society, while mass mobilization was less a feature of the PSF than

1 Milza, op. cit., pp. 138-42.

2 Irvine, op. cit., Chapter 5.

3 Soucy, “*French Fascism and the Croix de Feu*”, pp. 168, 171.

of the *Croix de Feu*. Whereas in the *Croix de Feu* coercion, mass mobilization, the leader cult and a loosely defined corporatism had been the means of restoring the unity of the nation, the PSF placed more emphasis upon the ideological strategies necessary to win elections.

Yet by attenuating its authoritarianism the PSF's lost some of its ability to present itself as independent. Although we have seen that the June crisis permitted the PSF to widen its recruitment, its ability to transcend the divisions of French society was lessened. Where the *Croix de Feu* won sympathy well outside its own ranks, especially in the parliamentary right, the same was not true of the PSF. It could be said that the PSF collapsed into the religious and economic divisions of French society, giving expression to many of the grievances suppressed on the level of interest group politics by the need for unity against the CGT. This is partly why the broad anti-communist alliance in the sphere of interest group politics, shown in Chapter ten, contrasted with an unprecedented degree of conflict within the right after June 1936.

The other parties of the right were as bound by these contradictions as the PSF. The PPF has more often than not been seen as fascist.⁴ In fact, the PPF, before it took the path of collaboration, was rather hard to distinguish from the PSF. Historians have usually exaggerated the extremism of the PPF whilst under-estimating that of the PSF. As for the Federation, it escaped the contradictions of a divided society by retreating ever further into its Catholic vision of the world.

Structure and organization

In June 1936 D-Day arrived. Yet far from engaging in a show-down with the left the *Croix de Feu* tamely submitted to dissolution. There is some evidence that in Lyon *Croix de Feu* members considered resistance,⁵ but in the event implementation of the decrees passed off almost without incident. Two cases of reconstitution of a dissolved organization were sent to the parquet, but neither led to prosecution. Virtually the only public action of the *Croix de Feu* during the strikes was to off-load stocks of *Le Flambeau du sud-est* and to counsel that members exhibit tricolours in their windows and lapels.⁶ Other leagues were no better able to resist. The *Jeunesses patriotes* greeted the arrival of the police at their headquarters with a coffin marked "ci-git le reste de toutes les libertés démocratiques".⁷ The only public act of defiance was for leaguers to wear a ten centime piece in their buttonholes: "dix sous".⁸

4 Brunet, op. cit., pp. 245-267. P. Burrin, op. cit., pp. 312 is almost alone in doubting the fascism of the pre-1940 PPF.

5 G. Howlett, op. cit. p. 205, quotes a letter from Lyon to Valence, which states "Pour parer à un coup de main il importe de savoir au plus tôt quels sont les buts et les moyennes de l'adversaire. C'est la mission la plus importante [...] aussi bien pour la ville que pour les autres localités (renforts possibles des amis et ennemis des régions environnantes) [sic]. This letter is given added importance by the fact that a document seized by the Police from the PSF in Valence mentions the existence of an intelligence organization centred on the rue Vaubecour in Lyon, (BB¹⁸ 30482). Guy Jarroson informed me that the JP had had contacts with all the other leagues during this period.

6 ADR 4m 236, 22-6-1936.

7 *L'Alerte*, July-August, 1936.

8 A pun, of course, on "dissous".

It is sometimes suggested that La Rocque did not resist dissolution because it offered him the chance to realise his long-term aim of converting the league into a conventional political party.⁹ But this is no more than a *post hoc* rationalization for which there is no supporting evidence. As La Rocque repeated both privately and publicly, in the circumstances of June 1936 resistance would have been at best futile and at worst counter-productive.¹⁰ In a sense the *Croix de Feu* were the victims of their own propaganda. Convinced that the mass of the workers were good Frenchmen, and hypnotised by Bolshevism, the league had prepared for seizure of power by a disciplined minority. Pre-emptive neutralization of public buildings was useless in a factory-centred conflict where the CGT and communists were overrun by their own troops.

To understand that June 1936 was a defeat for the leagues and for paramilitarism is essential to a correct interpretation of the PSF. The sentiment was widespread that the methods of the *Croix de Feu* had achieved little more than reinforce the unity of the Popular Front.¹¹ This is one reason why the slow disaggregation of the Popular Front did not lead to a revival of the kind of tactics that had been pursued by the leagues. The context in which the PSF emerged also helps to explain certain of the organizational features of the PSF.

“La famille PSF”

June 1936 was experienced as an assault upon a whole way of life. This can be seen in the reports of the *Nouvelliste*, one of which remarked upon:

la présence dans les principales artères de Lyon d'éléments troubles, venus de Villeurbanne, de La Guillotière, de Vaise pour faire le coup. Il y a beaucoup de repris de justice. Ils sont facilement repérable car on ne les voit jamais sur la Place Bellecour et rue de la République les jours de calme. Montés sur bicyclettes, motos et autres, ils parcourent les rues donnant des mots d'ordre à leurs hommes de main massés au coins de rue.¹²

The strikes crystallised latent fears of invasion of bourgeois space by the “barbarians” of the suburbs, fears which had already been seen in reactions to Popular Front demonstrations.¹³ Apprehension was magnified by the perceived passivity of the police and by the dissolution of the leagues.¹⁴ It is this which accounts for the politicization, even militarization, of large tracts of bourgeois society through the PSF.

9 R. Austin “The conservative right and the far right in France: the search for power”, in Blinkhorn, op. cit., p. 181. Machefer, “Les Croix de Feu”, passim. This was a view sometimes put forward by the PSF itself. In *Volontaire* '36, 15-8-1936, the formation of the PSF was presented as “a necessary next step for a disciplined organization”. In reality, the conquest of power through participation in elections had been rejected only a few weeks before dissolution. See Chapter 9.

10 *Volontaire* '36, 15-8-1936: La Rocque told an audience in Lyon that if he had gone into the streets in June “j'introduisais les Soviets partout”. La Rocque took the same line in private when dealing with Pozzo di Borgo's advice to resist. Pozzo had claimed to represent the real mood of the rank and file. Yet he was obliged to turn to terrorism in the form of the *Cagoule*.

11 For example, Jacques Débu-Bridel in *L'Union républicaine*, 10-5-1936, attributed the right's defeat in the elections to short-sighted campaigns which appeared to threaten the political rights of the people.

12 *Nouvelliste*, 24-6-1936.

13 Consciousness of the gulf between workers and bosses can also be seen in Henry Morel-Journel's self-reassurance: “Je n'ai pas peur du peuple. Je crois que je saurais lui parler” (diary, 29-8-1936).

14 *Nouvelliste* 6-6-1936 on the impotence of the opposition and the passivity of the police.

Hence also the dense implantation of the PSF in bourgeois areas of the city—the Prefect reported in April 1937 that up to 600 people were attending sector meetings.¹⁵ The other side of the coin was the difficulty faced by both right and extreme right in penetrating proletarian suburbs.

The tendency towards formation of a counter-society, present in the *Croix de Feu*, became more pronounced in the PSF. The following description of a dinner held by the EVP of the 7th arrondissement is typical:

Naturellement la gaieté s'était installée dans la salle: cette gaieté que les esprits chagrins veulent croire disparue en France, gaieté qui ne se retrouve que dans ces réunions entre vrais et bons camarades, où les soucis, les contingences, les rangs sociaux disparaissent pour faire place aux seules exigences de la solide amitié.¹⁶

PSF functions were a representation of the world as it ought to have been. This ideal world was conceived in terms of the family, the importance of which to the limitation of conflict in bourgeois society we have already seen.¹⁷ This is all the more significant because June 1936 was seen as a threat to the family. The conservative press had been horrified by the presence of women in occupied factories. The *Nouvelliste* spoke of “scandals and orgies”.¹⁸ In the following months there was a period of raised consciousness in many sections of the population, feminists included.¹⁹ One of the functions of the PSF section was to contain this threat to the established order.

The PSF section was often referred to as a family and its headquarters as a home.²⁰ Sometimes whole families were inscribed in the PSF. Activities normally carried on within the home or among small groups of friends were transferred to the party. Meetings usually ended with games of bridge or belotte. Sections organized theatricals, musical soirées and dances. The PSF had its own jazz band. At work the PSF member could join the SPF. The *Almanach PSF* ensured that members purchased goods in politically correct shops. The PSF even supplied a surrogate religion in the form of worship of the nation. Of course, the PSF family was a patriarchal one. The task of giving life to the section went to its leader: “c'est le chef qui [lui] donne son âme”.²¹ At the head of the PSF family was La Rocque, who was also the incarnation of France—he was known to militants as “le Patron”.

One of the novelties of the PSF was that it included thriving feminine sections in the form of *Action civique*. The goal of this organization was to prepare women for the day when they would be accorded the vote. To this end women would have access to libraries, participate in study groups, and act as “auxiliaires aux hommes pour les

15 ADR 4m 236, 24-4-1937.

16 *Volontaire* '36, 16-4-1937.

17 See Chapter 4.

18 *Nouvelliste*, 17-6-1936.

19 This was symbolized by the presence in the government of the well-known feminist Mme. Brunswick.

20 *Nouvelliste*, 4-4-1938 “Le PSF c'est un parti politique, mais c'est aussi une grande famille; donc l'obligation d'avoir une foyer”.

21 *Nouvelliste*, 4-4-1938.

aider dans les taches multiples que leur impose le PSF".²² The role of women was seen as subordinate, or confined to traditionally feminine activities such as social work. *Action sociale*, a subsection of *Action civique*, dealt with distribution of relief to the poor.²³ The PSF regarded work for married women as iniquitous.²⁴

It should be recognized however that the role of women in the PSF represented an advance of sorts, especially in comparison with the entirely male Federation. Madame Ruby, head of *Action sociale* in the Rhône, was admitted to the inner circles of the PSF.²⁵ This was possible because there was more to the PSF than a simple defence of the bourgeois family. Rather, the development of *Action civique* represented an attempt to contain the progress of feminism by according women some autonomy within a disciplined party and within certain spheres. One illustration of changing attitudes is that before 1936 women and children had been instructed to line the route of *Croix de Feu* parades in order to create a favourable atmosphere in the crowd. In 1938 and 1939 women and children were given a part in the parade itself. The same method of autonomy within an authoritarian party was used to contain the aspirations of conservative workers. The PSF did not resolve social conflicts. Rather it imported them into the party and contained them through symbolic submission to discipline.

PSF ideology also helps to explain its attitude to women. The liberalism of the old right had disqualified women from political involvement on the grounds that they were not rational. Victor Perret assigned women a place in the professional and family hierarchy from which they were not meant to escape. The PSF broke with the liberal view in that it emphasised mystique over reason. Like Perret the PSF stressed family and profession, but combined this with a pseudo-democratic egalitarianism. One side of this was the male virtue of the veteran; the other was a readiness to accord a limited public role to women. It is also possible to see a continuity with the PDP's efforts to combine democracy, profession and Catholicism. The PDP had been the only conservative party before the PSF in which women had played a visible role.

Just as the PSF saw the Popular Front as undermining the relationship between men and women, so it was held responsible for disturbing the position of children. Such fears help explain the outrage which followed an appalling incident in the Croix Rousse in April 1937, in which a nine year old boy was killed by a gang of youths. For the right there was no doubting that the attack was politically motivated, for the

22 AN 451 AP 172: statement of the goals of *Action civique* in the 1st arrondissement of Lyon.

23 *Le Volontaire* '36, 1-1-1936: "Si l'action proprement dite est réellement le rôle de l'homme, le nôtre, pour être moins en vue, n'en est pas moins actif". A woman lawyer described PSF feminism as consisting in assisting men in their social tasks (*Volontaire* '36, 24-6-1938).

24 *Le Volontaire* '36, 15-10-1937, 2-4-1937. "L'abandon de la famille, la diminution du sens moral, la perte d'un idéal et l'abaissement des forces spirituelles dont la France souffre avec tant d'acuité proviennent en grand partie de ce vice de la société capitaliste moderne".

25 After the war she became a *conseiller général*. The PSF nationally was effectively run by a triumvirate consisting of La Rocque, Noël Ottavi, and Mme. de Préval, head of *Action sociale*.

boy's father was a PSF member. But the real guilty party was a government which permitted participation of children in May Day parades.²⁶

The PSF paid special attention to children. To reinforce hierarchy and discipline it organised physical education through the *Société sportive d'éducation sociale* (SPES).²⁷ Even some PSF members had reservations about its methods, complaining that "l'enfant se lasse très vite d'une sorte de gymnastique ou le côté distrayant est à peu près banni".²⁸ Children were also integrated into the life of the section in a way which reinforced their positions in both family and society. The President of the 4th arrondissement section concluded a family evening by addressing "à tous les enfants le salut paternel du Père de la Famille PSF, la Rocque".²⁹ Children learned songs which expressed their fidelity to the party.³⁰

In contrast to the PSF, the Federation had always kept its social activities separate from its political ones. Social centres like the *Foyer de Perrache* were semi-autonomous bodies. Politics was the preserve of a small group; boules matches and dances were for the popular constituency of the right. Significantly the jazz band of the *Foyer de Perrache* deserted to la Rocque's party, where it became "le Jazz band PSF". Only in the late 1930s, in a bid to counter the success of the PSF, did the Federation introduce social activities into political meetings. The *Foyer de Perrache* was officially taken over by the Federation in 1938.

Paramilitarism

If the PSF represented a counter society it was a militarized one. Although the party described itself as "republican", and modelled its statutes on those of the SFIO, power flowed downwards, as would be expected in a party which preached a leadership cult.³¹ As *Le Volontaire* '36 stated, the *Croix de Feu* had not participated in elections because "il fallait une discipline et des chefs. Leur recrutement par l'électoratisme était impraticable et la sélection naturelle fut la seule manière d'y parvenir".³² Former members of the PSF reveal that the party was organised in a pyramidal manner, with "mains" of five men at the base, dizaines and chefs de dizaines and so on.³³ It was this which permitted rapid and secret convocation of members.³⁴ Through the confidential *Bulletin d'information du PSF* and a plethora of circulars, local leaders were bombarded with instructions on every subject from the organization of meetings

26 *Volontaire* '36, 30-4-1937, 7-5-1937.

27 SPES is the last surviving relic of the PSF in the Rhône.

28 AN 451 AP 172, Bruyas to de Préval, 4-2-1939. Bruyas said that SPES methods were "sèchement analytique".

29 *Volontaire* '36, 16-12-1938.

30 *Volontaire* '36, 6-1-1939. Nous lisons le Petit Journal / Nous nous intéressons à la politique / Nous lisons le Petit Journal / Le quotidien vraiment le plus social.

31 All of those former militants who were interviewed testified to the moral authority of la Rocque.

32 *Volontaire* '36, 15-12-1936.

33 ADR 4m 244, 23-9-1936. This was the method by which Marcel Perdriel envisaged the mobilization of shopkeepers. He and three others would alert six people who in turn would alert six more; eventually 4,000 shopkeepers, perhaps armed, would assemble.

34 Interview with M. Marcel Brunet, 1987.

to how to have oneself photographed if injured in a brawl.³⁵ The local PSF press was forbidden to improvise.³⁶ Section presidents were named from above. Local organizations were given some freedom in the choice of candidates for local elections, but in national elections Paris had the last word.³⁷

The paramilitarism of the *Dispos* was transferred into the EVP. The tasks of this organization included street sales of the party press, security at meetings and protection of those party orators who asked questions at Popular Front meetings. The party denied that the EVP represented a reconstitution of the *Dispos*. But there was considerable continuity of personnel—Jean Knersynski was a notorious member of both organizations. We shall also see that the EVP were frequently armed, sometimes with revolvers.³⁸ The party line was that the EVP were equivalent to groups in other parties. The point, however, is that groups of this type flourished only in the crisis situation of the 1930s. On the left even the Radicals had some recourse to them.³⁹ The parliamentary right had no paramilitary formations of its own, but approved, within limits, of the activities of the leagues.

For all this, the place of paramilitarism in the PSF was not the same as it had been in the *Croix de Feu*. No longer was Lyon divided into military style “sectors”, an implicit challenge to the regime. Instead the basic unit of organization was the “section”, which matched Republican administrative boundaries. There was no more talk of H-Hour or of days of reckoning. Where the *Croix de Feu* saw themselves as taking over a task in which the state had failed,⁴⁰ the PSF line was that it would go into the streets only to assist police and army in the event of disorder.⁴¹ In accordance with its readiness to aid the police the PSF laid plans for rapid assembly on the outskirts of the city.⁴² In other words, paramilitarism and authority remained essential to the PSF, but there was now a more defensive tone and with time more emphasis was placed upon elections.

At the time of the June strikes the priority of the right was to assert its existence and to define its territory. Hence the appeal of the press on 24 June, echoed by the parties, to put out tricolours. On 22 and 23 June members of all the dissolved

35 *Bulletin d'information du PSF* (A collection of this publication can be found in AN F7 15 151). Local organizations were sent a three page form to fill in.

36 *Bulletin d'information du PSF*, 27-8-1937.

37 Interview Me J. Nicol, 5-3-1987. Joseph Nicol, former President of the 3rd arrondissement section, remembers that he was approached from Paris with a request to stand in the general election of 1940.

38 J. Mazas, interviewed in 1987, informed me that the EVP were often armed with bull whips to protect them from the communists.

39 The communists and the Pivertist wing of the SFIO were best organized in this respect.

40 For example the idea expressed on 7 February 1934, that the *Croix de Feu* should hold themselves ready to “cleanse” the nation. See Chapter 9.

41 *Volontaire* '36, 16-7-1937. This had been the line of the moderate wing of the JP.

42 BB¹⁸ 30482. Detailed procedures for such an action in Lyon were discovered by the police in Valence. La Rocque denied their official status, but given that the PSF openly spoke of its intention to engage in such actions it would be odd if schemes of this sort had not existed. The *Bulletin d'information*, moreover, stated that the PSF was “maintenant assez nombreux pour que, dans chaque grande ville, dans presque toutes les petites villes, dans la plupart des villages, nos amis puissent, grâce à leurs seuls ressources, s'opposer, par un simple et tenace exercice de leurs droits civiques”.

leagues assembled on Place Bellecour. At this moment the strike movement was at its peak, but the timing of the demonstrations had more to do with a recrudescence of league activity in Paris now that occupations had ended there. The leaguers were confronted by a Popular Front demonstration which had marched from the Bourse du Travail on the left bank of the Rhône, via the Prefecture and the rue République to Bellecour, an itinerary which took it through much of bourgeois Lyon. On both nights the demonstrations were comparatively small—no more than 300 leaguers were involved. The police had no trouble in keeping the demonstrators apart.⁴³

During the summer there were a number of reports that the PSF had resumed the combative methods of the *Croix de Feu* in working class Vaise.⁴⁴ In September the PSF resumed its motorized sorties. A police report commented “Le Parti social français a continué sa campagne de recrutement, en reprenant les méthodes du mouvement *Croix de Feu* (réunions en banlieu,- convois automobiles,- convocations personnelles etc. ...)”.⁴⁵ The first such convoy was to Irigny, a largely working class commune, on 11 September. After the meeting there was the usual confrontation with counter-demonstrators during which the cars of the PSF were stoned.⁴⁶ Two days later several thousand activists were transported to rural Brindas in order to celebrate the Battle of the Marne.⁴⁷

The most serious incidents of all were on the 15 September, when the PSF held three large private meetings. Those in the 2nd and 6th arrondissement passed off without incident, but a counter-demonstration was organized to protest at a meeting in the Salle François Coppé in the 7th arrondissement.⁴⁸ By 8 o'clock several hundred had gathered outside the hall. As usual each side blamed the other for the firing of shots. But it is certain that bullets were fired through the windows of the hall, and that petrol bombs were thrown by the demonstrators. According to the *Nouvelliste* the PSF had to threaten the police with the intervention of 2,000 PSF at the Salle Blanchon (2nd arrondissement) before mounted police permitted evacuation of the hall.⁴⁹

The atmosphere in September was more tense even than during the *Croix de Feu* campaign of the previous autumn. There were demonstrations outside the shops of PSF members in Vaise.⁵⁰ There was a recrudescence of strikes. At the Rhodiaceta artificial fibre factory, again in Vaise, the workers ran the factory without the aid of

43 *Nouvelliste*, *Lyon républicain*, 24 and 25-6-1936.

44 On 5 July *Lyon républicain* reported a descent of the PSF into Vaise in order to sell *Le Flambeau*. The *Nouvelliste's* version of events was that Vaise was under the control of “les masses du Front Populaire. Disons «masses» puisque, paraît-il, le mot «hordes» beaucoup plus exacte, cependant [...] leur déplaît souverainement” (*Nouvelliste*, 15-7-1936). *La République lyonnaise* commented “Nous trouvons très bien que les *Croix de Feu*, même dissous, fassent respecter les vendeurs de leur journal. Et nous saluons le fait comme une heureuse nouveauté” (11-7-1936).

45 ADR 4m 236, 022-9-1936.

46 *Nouvelliste*, 12-9-1936. 250 people participated.

47 *Nouvelliste*, 14-9-1936.

48 A communist tract reprinted by the *Nouvelliste*: “Alerte! La racaille FASCISTE relève la tête, ils veulent tenir leur REUNION en pleine dans notre quartier ouvrier, dans la salle François Coppée, rue Victorin Sardou”.

49 *Nouvelliste*, *Lyon républicain*, 16, 17-9-1936.

50 See Chapter 11.

management or engineers, which led to hysterical denunciations of “sovietization” from the *Nouvelliste*.⁵¹ Here too the PSF were involved, for the strike had been triggered by an incident involving a supervisor who was said to be a PSF member. The police reported abnormally high sales of arms. As in 1935 the left wing press was full of reports of an imminent coup. Left wing municipalities were again put on alert.⁵² The PSF campaign continued into the new year, with a sortie to Charly in January.⁵³

The culmination was a departmental congress in February, the purpose of which according to the Prefect was a display of “disciplined force”.⁵⁴ The congress did indeed resemble fascist rallies. A massive security operation was mounted by the party.⁵⁵ Photographs in *Le Volontaire* '36 show delegates saluting in the fascist style. Reports of La Rocque's closing speech stress the ardour of the audience reaction rather than its content. René Rémond would see this merely as superficial borrowings from foreign regimes. In reality ritual submission to a leader is central to the perceived ability of the PSF to transcend the divisions of French society.

Rumours of a coup were given a modicum of credibility when in September a group of PSF in Clermont-Ferrand occupied the Prefecture in protest at the failure of the police to resolve a strike. There is, not surprisingly, no evidence that the PSF in the Rhône or anywhere else did plan to seize power, for this had not been the intention even of the *Croix de Feu*.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the campaign of 1936 was less aggressive than that of previous years. Sorties into communist heartlands were rarer. The mobilizations of 1936 did not take place against a background of apocalyptic D-Day rhetoric. The congress of the PSF had juxtaposed the style of a fascist rally with the detailed statements of policy more typical of conventional conservative parties. All the same, there is reason to question Pierre Milza's view that the PSF was a modern conservative party. Moreover, its paramilitary activities did not prevent the PSF from winning a by-election in the bourgeois 2nd arrondissement in October. The view that the PSF's spectacular success was due to its having rejected street politics must be questioned.

Nevertheless, in 1937 and still more in 1938 the actions of the PSF became markedly less aggressive. Paramilitary manoeuvres became ever more rare.⁵⁷ Confrontations between the PSF and communists continued to occur, usually at public

⁵¹ *Nouvelliste*, 17-9-1936.

⁵² *Lyon républicain*, on 14-9-1936, reported a plan to occupy Ste. Foy and to establish an artillery position on the Fourvière heights.

⁵³ *Nouveau journal*, 28-1-1937. 2,500 persons attended a rally. A communist counter-demonstration was fended off by the EVP.

⁵⁴ *Le Volontaire* '36, 19-2-1936. “Vous imposeriez à vos adversaires, vous donneriez à vos adhérents la conscience de leur véritable force”. ADR 4m 236, 22-2-1937. The Prefect added, “il est incontestable que l'organisation du PSF s'est affirmée aux yeux d'observateurs impartiaux comme étant bien dirigée, méthodique et disciplinée”.

⁵⁵ Interview with Marcel Brunet.

⁵⁶ A police inquiry into the intentions of the PSF carried out in September confirms this. ADR 4m 244, reports of 19, 21, 23, 24-9-1936.

⁵⁷ It is noteworthy that from late 1937 the confidential *Bulletin d'information du PSF* began to urge caution. For example large meetings were not to provoke public anger (21-10-1937); sales of the party press were not to be ensured in difficult areas merely by the presence of a large security service (No. 67, February, 1938).

meetings held by the parties. Many of these took place in small towns.⁵⁸ Perhaps the most serious was at l'Arbresle in July 1938, when a PSF meeting was broken up by communists.⁵⁹ But it was now rarer for either party to venture into the urban strongholds of the other. Paramilitarism, however, was not entirely eliminated from the PSF. Two incidents which occurred in 1937 and 1938, together with a brief look at set-piece demonstrations mounted by the PSF will illustrate this point.

The first incident happened during the *cantonales* of October 1937. The occasion was a PSF meeting in St. Fons in a hall rented from a large building contractor. Trouble began as groups of PSF members began to leave the meeting, watched by a group of counter-demonstrators. The police concluded that two volleys of shots were then fired by the EVP. The result was the death of a nineteen year old chemical worker and serious injuries to a PSF member, who had been shot by his own side.⁶⁰ A few days later, presumably in revenge, the PSF candidate for the Villeurbanne constituency was shot in the leg outside his home. *Le Volontaire* '36 published a photograph of him being carried to vote on a stretcher.⁶¹ These events are interesting firstly because they show the tense atmosphere which reigned even after the fall of the Blum,⁶² and secondly that elements in the PSF had not broken entirely with paramilitarism even during an electoral campaign. On the other hand, the meeting had not been part of a paramilitary sortie into the commune.

The second incident was of an entirely different nature. After the local elections of November 1937 relations between the PSF and the rest of the right deteriorated sharply. The causes need not detain us for the moment. It is sufficient to note that Federation Deputy Philippe Henriot was one of the fiercest critics of the PSF. In February 1938 he was invited to speak on "La comédie de la main tendue aux catholiques" at the Etoile Cinéma in the 2nd arrondissement. When Henriot began to speak PSF members dressed in leather jackets and flat caps unleashed barrage of whistles and jeers. Stink bombs and flour bags were thrown. Fighting broke out all over the cinema, mainly between PSF members and the PPF squad supposed to have provided security for the meeting. Commandant Louchet of the PSF and Albert Beugras for the PPF attempted to calm things. But Henriot was obliged to give his talk in a nearby café. In the following weeks abuse was heaped upon the PSF by all parties from the Federation to the royalists, accusing them of adopting the methods of the communists.

⁵⁸ *Nouvelliste*, 6-7-1937, *Volontaire* '36, 9-7-1937. Scuffles occurred when Marcel Perdriel attempted to ask a question at a communist meeting in Belleville.

⁵⁹ *Nouvelliste*, 18-7-1939.

⁶⁰ ADR *élections cantonales de 1937*, 7,8,9-10-1937. *Lyon républicain* and *Nouvelliste*, 10, 11, 12-10-1937.

⁶¹ ADR *élections cantonales de 1937*, 15-10-1937. The left wing press accused the PSF of staging the attack itself. This is highly unlikely, though an anonymous tip-off did lead the police to a chauffeur who worked for a wealthy member of the PSF.

⁶² ADR *élections cantonales de 1937*, 9-10-1937, Freynet to Prefect. Several PSF meetings in the suburbs failed. For example at Givors when Nels began to speak for the PSF, a communist interrupted, asking that all those who wanted to hear the PSF raise their hands. No-one did so. (7-10-1937).

This was not an isolated episode. Since May 1937 there had been complaints of disruption of Federation meetings by the PSF.⁶³ What is more, the Etoile Cinema incident was part of a national campaign of direct action against conservative critics of the PSF.⁶⁴ Those responsible for the attack on Henriot were not disowned. On the contrary, *Le Volontaire* '36 saw it as "un leçon sévère mais mérité".⁶⁵ This episode casts an interesting light on the claim that the fascist activism of the PPF contrasts with the bourgeois caution of the PSF.⁶⁶ A few weeks later Henriot returned to the Etoile Cinema and was able to speak only thanks to a large security operation mounted by the PPF.⁶⁷ The PSF had not lost its anti-establishment stance.

The importance of paramilitarism to the PSF can also be seen in the two massive set piece demonstrations mounted by the PSF on 11 November 1938 and 12 May 1939. The first, celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the armistice, was the largest manifestation of the far right ever seen in the Rhône. According to the police there were no less than 15,000 marchers, including 2,000 children and 3,000 women.⁶⁸ The parade took place in the period of extreme social tension which preceded the General Strike of 30 November 1930, and must be placed alongside a meeting of 18,000 held by the CGT on the following day.⁶⁹

In form the parade to the statue of Joan of Arc on 12 May 1939 resembled that of 11 November. It is all the more revealing of the nature of the PSF because it took place at a time when the threat from the left was much reduced. When compared to the 1936 Joan of Arc parade it reveals the PSF to be a party in transition. While the itineraries of the two demonstrations, from the Place de l'Abondance to the statue were identical,⁷⁰ the style had changed. Whereas in 1936 the order of march had been kept secret, in 1939 it was published in advance in *Le Volontaire* '36, though the EVP were warned to accept separate convocations. The orders were also far less detailed in 1939. Finally, women and children were given a prominent part in the parade itself, rather than merely being expected to whip up enthusiasm in the crowd. On arrival at Place Puvis de Chavannes, women and children were to form up in front of the men. Yet the military motif remains, partly attributable to the desire to demonstrate the will of the French to resist Hitler, and partly to the desire to restore national unity through

63 *Nouvelliste*, 9-5-1937 (incidents at Tarare, Mornant, Anse), 22-6-1937; *Union républicaine*, 13-3-1938.

64 My limited researches into the national PSF turned up two such incidents. The first was an attack on a Taittinger meeting in the Seine department (AN F7 14 817, 4-5-1938). The second was on a meeting of Xavier Vallat (*Nouvelliste*, 5-3-1938).

65 *Union républicaine*, 27-2-1938; *l'Attaque*, 26-2-1938, *Volontaire* '36, 4-3-1938; ADR 4m 236, 22-2-1938.

66 This is the underlying idea in Milza, op. cit., p. 176. I am not suggesting that the PPF was less extreme than the PSF, only that it is quite possible for a movement of the far right to ally with the constitutional right without ceasing to be extremist.

67 *Le Volontaire* '36, 11-3-1938.

68 ADR 1m 172, 11-11-1938. The party claimed 20,000 marchers.

69 ADR 4m 236, November 1938.

70 It is tempting to see this itinerary as a conscious rejection of the traditional starting point of right wing demonstrations on Place Bellecour. In fact the Prefect imposed the route on the marchers. ADR 1m 172.

submission to authority. As *Le Volontaire* '36 put it, "vous viendrez à cette manifestation PSF avec cette disciple librement consentie qui fait notre force."⁷¹

To sum up, the PSF remained an authoritarian, disciplined and hierarchical party, even after the decline in political tension which followed the General Strike of 30 November, 1939. Yet militarism was less pronounced. Motorized sorties had been abandoned early in 1937; the St Fons incident at the end of that year was the last serious clash with the communists. June 1936 had demonstrated the futility of paramilitary mass mobilizations. Old habits died relatively slowly, but the PSF concentrated its efforts more and more upon winning a parliamentary majority.

Finally, it is worth noting that the PPF were pushed in the same direction as the PSF. In December 1936 Doriot travelled to Lyon in order to launch his party. Having been refused permission to hold his meeting in municipal halls, Doriot was obliged to speak to a mere 150 persons in a café owned by a PPF member. By the time the meeting ended there was a large counter-demonstration of at least 4,000 outside the café. Doriot and his listeners managed to escape under police protection, but one PPF member shot a police inspector in the foot, and an ambulance thought to contain Doriot was attacked.⁷² The incident did nothing to reinforce the PPF's claim to be the only party capable of defeating the communists. The PPF's fate was similar to that of *Solidarité française* in June 1934.⁷³ According to the Prefect this fiasco compromised the PPF's attempts to reach a wider audience.⁷⁴ Mass mobilization was no more effective for the PPF than it had been for the PSF. Isolated PPF members were often beaten up by communists. In any case, given the strength of the PSF there was little room for another far right movement.⁷⁵ The same pattern was repeated on the national level, causing Doriot to seek salvation in an alliance with the Federation, just as the AF and JP had before him.

The ideology of the PSF A modern right?

Pierre Milza argues that the PSF rallied to the principles of democracy, thereby becoming the first modern conservative party in France. The PSF aimed to gain a parliamentary majority by winning over the clientele of the Radicals, and so adapted its programme to their sensibilities.⁷⁶ It is certainly the case that the PSF were moving in

⁷¹ *Le Volontaire* '36, 5-5-1939, 12-5-1939.

⁷² AN F² 2667, 17-12-1936.

⁷³ See Chapter 9.

⁷⁴ ADR 4m 236, 23-12-1936, "Le Parti populaire français n'ayant pu tenir les grandes réunions qu'il avait projetées n'a de ce fait pas touché la grande masse du public et son influence ne se semble pas avoir grandi". During the *cantonales* of 1937 the PPF candidate in Givors was forced to annul a meeting thanks to threats from the PCF (*Nouvelliste*, 8-10-1937).

⁷⁵ Coincidentally, La Rocque organized a meeting in Lyon on the day of the PPF congress (*Nouvelliste*, 25-7-1937).

⁷⁶ Milza, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-142.

the direction of conventional politics, and that they were hunting on the territory of the Radicals. But two qualifications are necessary.

One is that the PSF's commitment to democracy, as the persistence of paramilitary methods would suggest, was ambiguous.⁷⁷ The constitutional projects of the PSF were unchanged from the days of the *Croix de Feu*, and resembled closely those of all other movements of the right and extreme right. The programme included apparently democratic measures such as proportional representation and female suffrage. But these were accompanied by the reduction of parliamentary powers and the strengthening of the presidency. In any case reform of the constitution was rarely discussed directly in *Le Volontaire* '36. Political reform was seen as a step towards a corporate state.⁷⁸

There is also some ambiguity in the PSF's attitude to the elective principle. The party stressed that its goal was the legal conquest of power and emphasized its respect for the "edifice of the constitution".⁷⁹ From the beginning of 1938 the PSF placed more emphasis still upon elections. Prefectural reports stress the party's increasing avoidance of combative statements, and we have seen that after the Etoile Cinema incident, the PSF was less involved in street action.⁸⁰ The stimulus seems to have been the disappointing results, both in the Rhône and in France, of the local elections of October 1937 and the possibility that the Popular Front Majority would give way to a *Union nationale* in which there would be no room for the PSF. Hence the party's demands for dissolution of Parliament. It was also hoped that the introduction of proportional representation would free the PSF from the negotiations with other right wing parties which had ruined its chances in the local elections.⁸¹ Failing dissolution, all the party's efforts were to be devoted to preparation for the elections of 1940.⁸² In the Rhône, constituency committees were set up for this purpose. It is also interesting that the PSF's attitude to the communists changed. After the Clichy riots in Paris in March 1937 the PSF campaigned for the dissolution of the PCF.⁸³ Yet in late 1938 the PSF did not join a noisy crusade for dissolution on the part of the PPF, Federation and business organizations.

Yet none of this was incompatible with routine denunciations of Parliament and politicians. The idea of a *Union nationale* was denounced, in language that re-

77 Take for example, the PSF's understanding of the "British model": "Nous avons maintenant en France, un grand parti national comparable au grand parti unionist anglais. Que demain éclate une tentative révolutionnaire, le PSF est, aujourd'hui, capable de cristalliser, de grouper, d'organiser la résistance" (*Bulletin d'information du PSF*, 8-9-1937).

78 *Que veut le Parti social français*, 1937, p. 12.

79 For example, Dupraz in *Volontaire* '36, 8-12-1937.

80 ADR 4m 236, 22-1-1938, 22-2-1938.

81 *Volontaire* '36, 11-3-1938, 25-3-1938.

82 *Volontaire* '36, 1-6-1938, 12-1-1939.

83 *Volontaire* '36, 19-3-1937, 7-5-1937.

called the *Croix de Feu*, as a swindle and a plaster on an infected wound.⁸⁴ Unlike the *Croix de Feu* PSF members were not asked to hold themselves ready to cleanse the wound, but the ambiguity is evident.⁸⁵ Equally ambiguous was Canat de Chizy's belief that were a government proposal to limit an employer's right to hire and fire enacted, then "il ne reste plus que la rebellion illégale qui peut être réprimée par un gouvernement obéissant aux communistes".⁸⁶ Furthermore, in 1938 the PSF added its voice to a campaign for a "government of public safety", made up of "independent men" and "designated for a limited and precise task".⁸⁷ For the PSF such ideas were not anti-Republican. So the votes of special powers to Daladier in 1938 and 1939 could also be approved.⁸⁸ But Daladier was seen as a stop-gap. His position was menaced by the divisive and destructive impulses of Parliament. Daladier ought, it was said, to profit from the favourable conjuncture to carry out a "national revolution".⁸⁹ When in July 1939 Daladier demonstrated his Republicanism by postponing for two years the elections due in 1940, the PSF was outraged. But, said Johannès Dupraz, this was not because "les Français tiennent beaucoup à voter. Ils ont un dégoût accentué pour les élections". Rather they did not want to see the life of the Chamber prolonged.⁹⁰

The PSF's attitude to fascist regimes in Germany and Italy was equally ambiguous. In a lengthy article in *Volontaire* '36, the PSF set out its attitude to Nazism. It professed to admire in the German regime its restoration of the supremacy of the ideal over sordid materialism, its nationalism, its devotion to order and its efforts to promote class collaboration. The PSF had two objections to Nazism. The first, to its "warrior spirit", refers to Nazi bellicism in foreign affairs. There was no objection to the warrior spirit in politics, for the PSF admired "la vie austère et dangereux" of the Nazis. The second reservation of the PSF is that national unity had been imposed from above, rather than achieved in the country itself. This objection is weakened by the authoritarianism of the PSF's own programme and practice. What is most striking is the absence of a defence of German democracy.⁹¹

The PSF was much more forthright in its praise of the Italian regime. Like the rest of the French right the PSF in Lyon regarded Italy as the key to European diplomacy, and for that reason saw an alliance with Mussolini as essential. Johannès

84 *Volontaire* '36, 28-1-1938. In the 22-10-1937 edition we read this comment on the recent *cantonales*: "La masse électorale a fait stopper la révolution, mais les institutions qui sont gangrenées ne lui offrent, hélas, pas grande résistance".

85 All the more so in the national leader Barrachin's statement that the PSF would triumph legally if possible, by force if necessary, but would go into the streets only to resist communism. Howlett, op. cit., p. 222.

86 *Le Volontaire* '36, 28-7-1937.

87 *Volontaire* '36, 8-4-1938. On the PSF and the Daladier government see P. Machefer, "Le Parti social français", in *La France et les Français*, pp. 307-327. The campaign for a government of public safety was abandoned at the end of the year, when it became plain that such a government would be dominated by Daladier.

88 *Volontaire* '36, 24-3-1939: "une simple permission de gouverner donné à un républicain non-suspect".

89 *Volontaire* '36, 24-2-1939, 10-3-1939, 12-5-1939.

90 *Volontaire* '36, 2-6-1939.

91 *Volontaire* '36, 15-18-1936. See also 19-11-1937, 11-11-1938, 18-11-1938 for Canat's views on the Strength through Joy programme.

Dupraz had something of an obsession with Mussolini. He visited the country in 1935. On his return he wrote a book, in which his only criticism of the regime was that Italian corporations had become cogs in the state machine.⁹² Yet like the PSF Italian fascists had set out to create a middle way between dirigism and liberalism. The purpose of this argument is not to demonstrate that the PSF was fascist, rather that it was not whole-heartedly committed to democracy. The PSF was not fascist, but the reasons were not those given by the PSF.



Figure 1

It is also worth mentioning in passing the PSF's attitude to racism. The PSF's anti-racism was another reason given by the PSF for its opposition to fascism.⁹³ It is not, however, difficult to identify a racist sub-current in the PSF. Léon Blum was often attacked in anti-semitic terms. This can be seen in Figure 1, which in the classic manner assimilates Jews, international finance and socialism.⁹⁴ One PSF militant recounted how since a visit to North Africa he could understand why Muslims periodically pillaged Jewish shops.⁹⁵ The PSF also regularly denounced the presence of foreign workers in France, and depicted the communist party as a party of foreigners.⁹⁶ Yet racism was never central to PSF doctrine. In view of the strong tradition of anti-semitism in France this is perhaps surprising. The explanation is partly the desire

⁹² Johannès Dupraz, *Regards sur le fascisme*, Lyon, 1935.

⁹³ *Volontaire* '36, 19-11-1937.

⁹⁴ For example at a communist meeting the PSF militant Jullien asked to speak on the "interesting topic", of the collusion of the trusts and international finance with the Jew Blum (*Le Volontaire* '36, 1-4-1938). The PSF also approved Proudhon's French socialism, not "le marxisme à l'Allemand et à la Russe ou à la Juive, ceci est pour Messieurs Blum, Moch etc. ...".

⁹⁵ *Le Volontaire* '36, 19-9-1938. La Rocque himself was equivocal in his view of the Jews. He was reported as saying that "Nul moins que lui ne désire lancer les français dans une croisade antisémite, mais tout son sang de français bouillonne quand il pense que son pays est gouverné par un juif tel que Blum" (*Le Volontaire* '36, 19-2-1937).

⁹⁶ *Le Volontaire* '36, 30-7-1937.

to avoid identification with the Nazis and perhaps more importantly the roots of so many PSF militants in social Catholicism. In this period the Church unambiguously denounced racism.

In sum the PSF's understanding of Republicanism was ambiguous. Indeed, it is divorced from both democracy, which was rarely mentioned, and from pluralism, as the party's corporatist ideas reveal. But there is a real change in tone, especially in 1938, and particularly when the words of the PSF are placed alongside its deeds.

A second objection to the Milza thesis is that the PSF is hardly unique in its desire to win over the Radical electorate. This had been the aim of every conservative movement in France since the turn of the century. Where Edouard Aynard had looked to "la promotion sociale", the *Croix de Feu* had aimed to present itself as the only force capable of dealing with the communists. There were a variety of ways of approaching the Radical electorate, some democratic, some not. What is more, this was only part of the PSF's strategy, for it also sought to unite the right and to reintegrate the working class into the nation.

The key word was "reconciliation". As André Gautier-Brisson, stockbroker and Director of the Rhône Politburo, put it, the aim was to bridge the gap between Radical Lyon and communist Villeurbanne and to unite the "generous and social right" with those who mistakenly believed that only the left could bring social justice.⁹⁷ For Johannès Dupraz only the PSF could achieve reconciliation because it alone was independent of the sectional interests which had distorted the efforts of the old right.⁹⁸ Hence the PSF's denunciation of the "trusts", which had profited from the free-for-all of liberal capitalism in order to enslave France. It followed from this that the PSF alone represented the nation. Rival parties had "émasculé ce mot en lui donnant une signification partisane".⁹⁹ Ultimately, la Rocque himself personified France, with his "legendary strength and courage", "his charm and his smile" and his unique ability to gain acceptance as "le chef".¹⁰⁰

Like the *Croix de Feu* PSF saw themselves as a national opposition, the sole force capable of uniting a divided nation and of reasserting the national interest. As such it remained a movement of radical conservatism. But whereas the league had relied almost entirely upon the military and nationalist motif, and had refused to pronounce on detailed matters of policy, the PSF developed a sophisticated ideology designed to achieve its ideal of reconciliation.¹⁰¹ Yet elaboration of a detailed programme, together with the decline of the paramilitarism which had been so essential

⁹⁷ *Volontaire* '36, 19-2-1937. This also shows the influence within the PSF of ideas which Sternhell identifies as fascist.

⁹⁸ *Volontaire* '36, 28-4-1938.

⁹⁹ *Volontaire* '36, 10-8-1937.

¹⁰⁰ *Volontaire* '36, 19-2-1937.

¹⁰¹ *Volontaire* '36, 19-2-1937.

to the *Croix de Feu*'s above party image, caused the PSF to become identified more and more with special interests.

Les classes moyennes

The PSF's devotion to the cause of the *classes moyennes* was designed to detach the Radical electorate from its leaders.¹⁰² The *classes moyennes* reference also expressed, and simultaneously contained, the anti-establishment views of the PSF constituency. In this way the PSF sought to reunite the divided bourgeoisie.¹⁰³ These aims, however, were only partially achieved.

One of the central themes of PSF propaganda was that the liberal economy born in 1789 had unleashed a blind struggle of selfish individuals. Because of inequality of capabilities this had led to the emergence of "economic feudalisms". Motivated by the same greed, the workers in June 1936 had won a series of reforms. Since only the "trusts" could afford to pay for these measures, the result was an alliance with the CGT and the state which would eventually lead to the elimination of the *classes moyennes*.¹⁰⁴ This was a view with radical implications.¹⁰⁵

Yet it was also made clear that the threat to the *classes moyennes* from communism was the more serious. For Johannès Dupraz, who was after all Deputy Director of AICA, the rapaciousness of big business was limited by "a certain humanism" and by its respect for the Franc; the currency represented a "national reality" superior to themselves.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the PSF's attitude to the CGT and to the Popular Front reforms was indistinguishable from that of the patronat.

The radical potential of *classes moyennes* discourse was also restricted by defining the term broadly enough to include almost the whole nation. For André Dominique the *classes moyennes* had only one quality, that of being intermediate between the "grand patronat" and the proletariat.¹⁰⁷ The category therefore included artisans, managers, technicians, hairdressers, pork butchers, engineers and all the "disinherited of the Popular Front".¹⁰⁸ Since Dominique distinguished the "patronat", those at the head of medium and small enterprises, from the "trusts" it was possible to include the major part of the capitalist class.¹⁰⁹ Johannès Dupraz went even further, defining the "trusts" in moral terms: the intervention of big business in politics was to

102 *Volontaire* '36, 19-2-1937: the departmental congress of the PSF was said to have been viewed favourably by "ces classes moyennes, jusqu'ici les troupes d'élite du Parti radical". See also 26-11-1937. The national leader Barachin said in Lyon, "ceux que nous voulons défendre aussi, ce sont ceux-là mêmes que le Parti radical a lâchement abandonnés, je veux parler des classe moyennes" (*Volontaire* '36, 19-2-1937).

103 The best treatment of this issue is Boltanski, op. cit., chapter 1.

104 *Volontaire* '36, 16-4-1937, 12-1-1938.

105 *Le Volontaire* '36, 15-8-1936: "Unissez vous contre les ennemis communs qui vous exploitent: les trusts, les puissances d'argent, les Monopoles de fait, le parti de Moscou". See also Canat de Chizy, 31-12-1937.

106 *Le Volontaire* '36, 28-4-1938.

107 *Le Volontaire* '36, 26-11-1937.

108 *Le Volontaire* '36, 26-11-1937.

109 *Le Volontaire* '36, 12-1-1938.

be criticized only where it was “powerful, anonymous and occult”.¹¹⁰ At the other end of the social scale, some foresaw the inclusion of workers into the *classes moyennes* through acquisition of property.¹¹¹

As Luc Boltanski argues, the broad definition of the *classes moyennes* made it possible to reduce the bourgeoisie to a tiny clique and to ignore differences in wealth within the conservative bloc.¹¹² By linking the *classes moyennes* to intermediacy it was also possible to make them the spokesmen of general interest, just as engineers, heads of department and foremen, it was said, were better placed than employers, and much better placed than workers, to interpret the needs of the enterprise.¹¹³

All the same, PSF writers routinely referred to the problems involved in uniting the *classes moyennes*. La Rocque told an audience in Lyon that the PSF would not attempt to promote the interests of one or another sectional interest; it would “stand above” the potential discord within the *classes moyennes*.¹¹⁴ Yet it is to be doubted whether the PSF in Lyon succeeded in remaining neutral. This can be seen in a divergence over the relationship of the proletariat to the *classes moyennes*. On the one hand Jacques Picquery envisaged the acquisition of private property by the working class, and the “regulated” disappearance of “unproductive large fortunes”.¹¹⁵ Underlying the arguments of this legal consultant to a group of artisan weavers, was the idea that the *classes moyennes* were defined by possession of a “patrimony”, which they had earned by their own labour, and which distinguished them from anonymous finance capital.

On the other hand Canat de Chizy, engineer in an artificial fibre factory, saw the working class as a permanent feature of society. He preferred therefore to place the “cadres” at the centre of the *classes moyennes*, and to make “competence” their essential characteristic. The term “cadre” had the additional advantage of implying leadership and status within enterprise and society and in turn of of the most senior cadres (such as Canat) within the PSF. The idea of the cadre could therefore be used to integrate all those who experienced June 1936 as a threat to their status.¹¹⁶ We have seen that this was a major reason for the rightwards shift of white collar workers after June 1936. Thus for Canat the cadres included the “healthy” elements of the working class, as well as the best small businessmen, shopkeepers and even the most productive of the peasantry.¹¹⁷

110 *Le Volontaire* '36, 28-4-1938.

111 *Le Volontaire* '36, 12-3-1937.

112 Boltanski, op. cit., pp. 56-7.

113 *Le Volontaire* '36, 14-1-1936.

114 *Le Volontaire* '36, 19-3-1937.

115 19-2-1937. Picquery retained his faith in liberalism, arguing that any measures taken by the PSF must allow competition to function (*Le Volontaire* '36, 5-3-1937).

116 Hence the concern of the PSF with the levelling of salaries since June (*Le Volontaire* '36, 30-6-1939), and with the problems of foremen, (24-2-1939).

117 *Le Volontaire* '36, 19-2-1937 (this article was placed next to that of Picquery), 26-2-1937, 14-1-1938.

In the conflict between Picquery and Canat we have the old dichotomy between new and old sections of the middle class. Luc Boltanski argues that this division was not obvious to contemporaries, so an alliance was in practice formed between the two fractions of the *classes moyennes* - small business and the cadres.¹¹⁸ The example of Lyon, however, suggests that this view must be qualified. We have seen that in the sphere of labour relations such an alliance was formed.¹¹⁹ But the same alliance was not reproduced in party politics. The PSF was dominated ultimately by a narrower group of managers, engineers and medium businessmen, with a mass following among white collar workers and those peasants influenced by social Catholicism. Pro-Radical small producers were not won over. Even conservative small businessmen had little voice in the PSF, Picquery's views being far less influential than those of Canat. Indeed, the former ceased to write for *Le Volontaire* '36 in the spring of 1937.

In the end the *classes moyennes* discourse of the PSF did not succeed in creating a broad conservative party. This was partly because the discourse itself owed something to the ideological preconceptions and experiences of groups mobilized in June 1936, and partly because June had compromised the ability of the PSF to stand apart from interest groups. This point can be elucidated by looking at the PSF's views on corporatism.

L'état social PSF

We saw in Chapter eight that corporatism arose from a crisis of civil society, in which an extreme struggle between interests groups compromised the ability of bodies from the Chamber of Commerce to Parliament to mediate the general interest. Corporatists assumed that divisions were the work of outside agents such as politicians. There was a single professional and general interest which could be reasserted were the professions to govern themselves. The same kind of reasoning was applied to industrial relations after June: strikes were the work of agitators in the pay of Moscow. So if unions were depoliticized then they could be contained in a corporate system. The central problem, however, was that the general interest was not self-evident. It had to be enforced. The ambiguity of corporatism has to be stressed because historians like Pierre Milza use the professed anti-statism of both *Croix de Feu* and PSF to distinguish them from fascism.¹²⁰

118 Boltanski, op. cit., pp. 62-74. He stresses the common hostility of the two groups, unlike big business, to devaluation and inflation. This is unconvincing, because most big businessmen were also concerned to maintain a strong currency. He also argues that extension of the term "patrimony" to include paper qualifications could unite cadres with small business.

119 Luc Boltanski's researches are mainly confined to interest group politics, so he assumes the same unity in politics.

120 Milza, op. cit., p. 137. To be sure, I am not arguing that the PSF were fascist, but I am suggesting that the PSF was an ambiguous movement. (The question of the state in fascism looks more complex still in view of the extreme hostility of the modern extreme right to government involvement in the economy).

Typically the PSF presented its corporatism as an alternative to state intervention. Canat de Chizy, for example, criticized the étatisme of Marcel Déat's system of planning. For this reason he preferred the Salazar regime in Portugal to the "deformed" corporations of Austria and Germany.¹²¹ Yet closer analysis reveals the contradictions of corporatism. In all those states which experimented with corporatism in the 1930s and 1940s authoritarianism was the result.

The PSF's corporatism was intimately related to its views on the *classes moyennes*, in that it was conceived as a way of preventing the anarchy of the market economy from leading to the elimination of "les petits". Already the corporation implied discipline. Thus Canat condemned a plan, emanating from the Socialist Minister of the National Economy, to facilitate voluntary agreements on pricing, raw material supply and marketing.¹²² It was, said Canat, no longer possible to save liberalism. Ententes must be compulsory when desired by the majority in the profession. This implied coercion of those who disagreed with the majority. Furthermore, the entente would be subject to a degree of state regulation, for the government would have to ensure that the decisions of the corporation were respected. He argued, rather obscurely, that this would not amount to state control because the government would not be represented in the corporations themselves, and because state authority would be balanced by that of the regional corporation.¹²³

Canat goes further than this, for by corporatism he meant not just agreements between firms, but an elaborate system of regional bodies in which would sit the representatives of business, cadres and workers.¹²⁴ They would deal not only with supply and demand, but also with labour relations and working practices, and would perhaps even manage joint enterprises.¹²⁵ This meant the setting up of a permanent organization with some sort of authority, especially as inter-professional questions would be dealt with by "experts".¹²⁶

Canat's assumption was that left to itself the profession could manage its own affairs. Yet he recognized that existing syndicates were ill-fitted to take their place in this system, for those of employers and workers (but not cadres) were dedicated to pursuit of the class struggle. They must therefore be reformed along hierarchical lines and "depoliticized". They would then become truly professional bodies. This in practice meant either a purge or suppression of the CGT.¹²⁷ To be on the safe side, employers would play a part in the choice of workers' delegates to corporate bodies. The right to strike would be limited in the short term to cases of non-observation of a col-

121 *Le Volontaire* '36, 11-3-1938. On another occasion Canat criticized even Salazar for the politicization of corporations (*Le Volontaire* '36, 25-3-1938).

122 Paradoxically this article was entitled "Contre l'étatisation de la production".

123 *Le Volontaire* '36, 1-10-1937.

124 Ententes of the type described above were only a step to the corporate state (*Le Volontaire* '36, 20-8-1937).

125 *Le Volontaire* '36, 7-5-1937. A separate tripartite system would advise the government on legislation.

126 *Le Volontaire* '36, 31-12-1937.

127 *Le Volontaire* '36, 1-12-1936, 14-1-1938.

lective contract, and in the long term abolished. It is for these reasons that Canat argued that corporatism presupposed a moral revolution.¹²⁸

Canat's attitude to patronal unions is more complex. Apparently they were treated in the same way as the CGT. Gignoux and the CGPF were from time to time denounced for their combative attitudes, and compared unfavourably with the "social" approach of the PSF.¹²⁹ Yet on every practical issue, from the forty hour week to wages, the PSF agreed with the CGPF.¹³⁰ In any case, no employer would not have claimed to be acting in the best interests of his workers. All the same, the corporation, or rather corporatist ideology, did imply authority over individual employers. This was because corporatism had been partly a response to the breakdown of negotiation in existing professional bodies.¹³¹ This point is illustrated by a discussion of the effects of the devaluation of 1937. The government's price commission had permitted those firms who relied on imported raw materials to raise their prices. The PSF argued that such firms ought to keep down prices in the general interest, especially as they would have the benefit of new export openings. So the government is criticized implicitly for not intervening in the market to protect the national interest. The PSF escapes this dilemma by asserting that in the organized profession such problems could be overcome. Conflict is therefore obscured and the need to coerce certain firms disguised.¹³²

The implicit recognition of the need for authority can also be seen in the PSF's view of the relationship between corporations and the political power. Although the PSF demanded reinforcement of the state, reforms were nevertheless to be confined to those necessary to the maintenance of order. On the face of it this owes something to the liberalism. Yet we have already seen that "maintenance of order" was defined in such a way as to include intervention in labour relations and the enforcement of the professional interest. As Canat put it, the state would "astreindre les citoyens à rester dans les limites du bien général, même au détriment de leur intérêt particulier".¹³³ Furthermore, the PSF argued that the highest corporate body would have no power to legislate, but would merely express its views to the political power (i.e. the presidency), which in the end would have the power to decide. In this way the "autonomy" of the state, already freed from parliamentary control, would be restored.¹³⁴

128 *Le Volontaire* '36, 30-9-1936, thus Canat criticized Aristide Potton for his belief that the corporate state could be brought about by "the wave of a magic wand".

129 *Le Volontaire* '36, 12-2-1937, 11-2-1938.

130 In *Le Volontaire* '36, 28-7-1937, Canat declared his backing for the CGPF's decision to regard the CGT plans on hiring and firing as an attack on the patronat's right to command. Compulsory arbitration was at first attacked by the PSF, like the CGPF, as an attack on the rights of bosses (*Le Volontaire* '36, 1-12-1937). Then when employers began to see arbitration as a means to pacification the PSF too changed its mind.

131 *Le Volontaire* '36, 1-12-1936. One of the stated goals of the corporation was to bring about "harmony between the different industries, from the largest to the smallest".

132 *Le Volontaire* '36, 6-8-1937.

133 *Le Volontaire* '36, 1-10-1937.

134 *Le Volontaire* '36, 14-1-1938, 25-2-1938.

Like the idea of the *classes moyennes*, corporatism was designed to reconcile a divided bourgeoisie and to discipline the labour movement. Again, however, the PSF's turn to electoralism undermined the effectiveness of the ideology. Whereas the *Croix de Feu* had rarely touched on the details of corporatism, PSF more and more betrayed the special interests of its own constituency. The corporation was explicitly designed to reduce the influence of big business by means of regionalization.¹³⁵ For this reason organization would be by finished product (such as electrical goods), rather than raw material (such as steel). The business section of the corporation would consist of an equal number of delegates of small, medium and large firms.¹³⁶ The PSF went as far as to target particular sectors. For example large firms in the crockery industry were taken to task for having unleashed a price war in order to drive medium and small firms out of business. Organization of the profession, it was argued, would prevent such things from happening.¹³⁷ In this way too the PSF undermined the effectiveness of *classes moyennes* discourse, which relied upon reduction of big capital to a tiny and anonymous clique.

Just as the PSF reflected the views of the medium businessmen who were so numerous in its ranks, so we have seen that the organized profession gave a prominent role to cadres.¹³⁸ Here too the PSF proposed practical measures—for example obligatory consultation of cadres before dismissal of workers—which tended to undermine the integrative potential of the cadre discourse.¹³⁹ It was on the other hand possible to overcome a potential opposition between the bosses of medium firms and cadres, who generally worked in large industry. This could be achieved partly by the break-up of anonymous large enterprises into federations of semi-autonomous workshops run by managers and engineers. They would thus come to resemble medium firms.¹⁴⁰ There was also an appeal to “competence”—both engineers and medium businessmen could be seen as gaining expertise and knowledge through their intermediate position and their direct contact with workers.

The notion of “competence” could also be used to incorporate small employers and the artisanate into the PSF. The party asserted that France could never accommodate itself to mass production.¹⁴¹ But more often it was argued that the organized profession would encourage “small inventors” and ensure that the benefits of techno-

135 *Le Volontaire* '36, 31-12-1937.

136 *Le Volontaire* '36, 7-5-1937. Vichy corporate bodies were organized according to raw materials, and were dominated by big business.

137 *Le Volontaire* '36, 1-4-1938. We saw in Chapter eleven attacks on Gillet. *Le Volontaire* '36 also echoed the concerns of medium and small metallurgy, denouncing large car and electrical firms as benefitting from the largesse of the state (2-7-1937).

138 See page 362. For Canat the cadres were better placed than employers, especially big businessmen to represent the general interest because of their intermediate position. They could therefore play a part in keeping the state out of the profession (*Le Volontaire* '36, 26-2-1937).

139 *Le Volontaire* '36, 31-12-1937.

140 *Le Volontaire* '36, 18-6-1937. The model was the Czech Bata firm. For the popularity of such ideas see Kolboom., op. cit., pp. 73-4.

141 *Le Volontaire* '36, 15-1-1937.

logical progress were disseminated to the artisanate.¹⁴² The organized profession would also regulate apprenticeships and prevent over-crowding of trades. Yet the role of small business in the organized profession was less often discussed than was that of industry. Some PSF writers were enthusiastic proponents of rationalization.¹⁴³ André Dominique even advised that rationalization was a means of compensating for reductions in hours.¹⁴⁴ Dominique and Canat were also interested in the ideas of the patronal *avant garde*, as expressed by Detoef and the review *Ordre réel*.¹⁴⁵ There was little room for the artisanate in their world except perhaps as dependant sub-contractors. Indeed, Canat argued that in the silk industry, where electrification had favoured home weavers, that artisans should not be allowed to compete with industrial concerns. In the end, the views of the PSF reflected those of medium businessmen and engineers, committed to industrial methods, but suspicious of big business. In particular the mixture of modern methods and suspicion of mass production may have appealed to medium firms in the engineering industry, where "flexible production" was the rule.

It was not simply, however, that the PSF reflected the economic interests of its constituency. In some circumstances the idea of "competence" might have appealed to the artisanate. But the PSF's ideas would have had also to have encountered a favourable ideological terrain. This could have been provided by Catholic Action, which was not only corporatist, but was based on the idea of the professional elite. Yet the artisanate remained anti-clerical, while as we shall see that the PSF became ever more Catholic.¹⁴⁶

In the countryside, on the other hand, the PSF's ideas connected with those of the JAC.¹⁴⁷ But even here the price was a narrowing of the PSF's potential appeal, as the party's views came more and more to coincide with those of the JAC. Thus the PSF took up the cause of small producers of wheat as the *Office du blé* was reformed in 1938 and 1939 according to the wishes of large growers. That the PSF ended up defending the original socialist version against the views of the USE illustrates the tensions within the conservative bloc caused by the Popular Front.¹⁴⁸ Defence of special

142 *Le Volontaire* '36, 20-4-1937 (Marcel Perdriel of the small business UF), who argued that the organized profession would ensure the health of the artisanate by encouraging the small inventor.

143 *Le Volontaire* '36, 5-2-1937. It was argued that technological progress caused only temporary problems which could be resolved by the organized profession.

144 *Le Volontaire* '36, 15-10-1937.

145 *Le Volontaire* '36, 15-7-1938, 3-3-1939. Both Canat and Dominique wrote enthusiastically of the "Rencontres de Pontigny", at which French *avant garde* employers and trades unionists met with Swedish counterparts. Their only reservations were on Detoef's politics. For example Dominique criticized the "free play of unions", by which Detoef meant that existing unions would play a part in his corporate bargaining system.

146 Catholic Action's specialist branch for small businessmen, led in Lyon by Joseph Folliet, made some progress in 1937 and 1938. See also Zdatny, op. cit., pp. 106-7.

147 The PSF's appeal for a peasant elite recalled the JAC. "Chacun en France parle au nom du paysan. C'est parce que le paysan est resté amorphe devant la crise, c'est parce qu'il a cherché des remèdes individuels aux maux dont il souffrait, et qu'il s'est toujours refusé toute action collective que les pouvoirs publics ont pu le berner de tous temps et que des incompetents profitards ont parlé si longtemps en son nom".

148 *Le Volontaire* '36, 21-2-1938, 5-5-1939. Evidence of the growing sectionalism of the PSF is provided by the fact that in order to provide outlets for producers of secondary cereals, the army was asked to make greater use of horse-drawn transport. The implications for national defense were not discussed (*Volontaire* '36, 7-7-1939).

interests affected the PSF's views on the organized profession, for one of the purposes of the corporation would be to limit the influence of specialized lobbies dominated by large growers such as the *Association générale des producteurs de blé*.¹⁴⁹ In 1939 the PSF declared its intention to “demolish” existing syndicates if they did not reform themselves, to replace “vieux dévouements à la cause syndicale” and politicians with a genuine peasant leadership, and to furnish syndicates with a powerful permanent organization. The PSF also aligned itself with the JAC in approving separate representation for proprietors, tenants, sharecroppers and agricultural labourers within the corporation.¹⁵⁰

The same tensions can be seen in the relationship of the PSF trades union, the SPF, to the parent party. The principal motive in the formation of the SPF was to undermine the CGT, a task which the new unions set about with some purpose. But the SPF also functioned as a means of containing tensions within the right caused by Popular Front reforms. Here too the PSF was not entirely successful. Without compromising its hostility to the CGT the SPF was tempted to go beyond the programme of the PSF in its search for legitimacy in the factories and offices. Thus in the silk industry the SPF claimed credit for the implementation of the Forty Hour Law, accusing CGT negotiations of deliberately slowing down negotiations in order to punish white collar workers for not having joined the CGT.¹⁵¹ In the banks the SPF denounced “les syndicats patronaux, dirigés par la haute finance internationale qui cherchent à acheter nos dirigeants pour arrêter leur action syndicale”, and called for index linking of salaries, a demand to which employers were deeply hostile.¹⁵² Unlike the PSF, the SPF condemned the Daladier decree laws, but typically nevertheless, contributed to the defeat of the general strike which followed.¹⁵³ By 1939 the leaders of the SPF were falling out amongst themselves.¹⁵⁴ Similar problems seem to have occurred on the national level, for in 1939 the PSF created a new organization, the *Propagande ouvrier et commercial* (POC), directly under party control. In Lyon, POC leader Jacques Darodes wrote of the lack of “*Croix de Feu* spirit” in the SPF, and charged the POC with the task of infiltrating and controlling the trades unions.¹⁵⁵ Under the Vichy regime the SPF separated formally from the PSF.

It could, of course, be objected that in spite of the PSF's growing pre-occupation with special interests the opposition to the CGT remained primary. The SPF, after all participated in strike-breaking. We also saw in Chapter eleven that the

149 *Le Volontaire* '36, 10-3-1939.

150 *Le Volontaire* '36, 20-1-1939, 27-1-1939, 3-2-1939.

151 *SPF des ouvriers et employés de soieries*, 25-5-1937. In the April issue a plea had been made for application of the notorious “cinq-huits” rather than a more flexible regime. *La Liberté syndicale*, (journal of the SPF in the south-east), July 1937, approved of the Forty Hour Act where it could lessen unemployment—a position far in advance of any other conservative movement.

152 *Nouvelliste*, 4-8-1937.

153 P. Machefêr, “Les Syndicats professionnels français, 1936-1939”, *Mouvement social*, 119, 1982, 91-112.

154 ADR 4m 236, 31-5-1939.

155 Darodes to Durafour, 20-4-1940, quoted in Boulet, op. cit., annexe.

mobilization of cadres had in part been due to a sense of having been abandoned by cowardly employers. From time to time *Le Volontaire* '36 echoed complaints that employers were too soft.¹⁵⁶ The PSF also sought to mobilize the peasantry against the Popular Front by portraying the *Office du blé* as an attempt at sovietization and as evidence that the government was exclusively concerned with interests of the workers. Above all, we have seen that on one level a tacit alliance against the CGT did emerge.

The contention here, however, is that unity in the sphere of labour relations was not incompatible with exceptional disunity in politics. The need for a united front against the CGT merely displaced conflicts elsewhere. The PSF therefore brought together elements which had long been opposed to the business and political establishment in Lyon, grouping them around the idea of an elite defined by competence. Consequently the PSF was obliged to take up a position on the historic conflicts in the French right about industrialization and the religious question.

The new Jacobins

Pierre Milza argues that in order to win over the Radical electorate the PSF took on board elements of that party's programme. It therefore moved away from the far right. Jacobinism was indeed central to the image of the PSF. Yet the PSF divorced the ambiguous social heritage of the Jacobins from political democracy, integrating it into an authoritarian view of the world. In so doing the PSF sought to wrest the Revolutionary tradition from the Popular Front and to undermine the commitment of the Radicals to it. The PSF's Jacobinism also gave expression to, and simultaneously contained, the radical dimension of the PSF's conservatism.

The Revolution was central to La Rocque's idea of "reconciliation". The PSF put 14 July on the same level as the *fête Jeanne d'Arc*. The symbolism of the Revolution was even more essential to the PSF in Lyon.¹⁵⁷ This is probably because of the strength of Radicalism there, and because of Herriot's identification with Girondins.¹⁵⁸ Jacobinism can be seen in the title of the party journal, *Le Volontaire* '36, with its evocation of the Volunteers of 1792. This title also recalls the *Volontaires nationaux*, the most fascisant element of the *Croix de Feu*. Next to the title are the features of a National Volunteer drawn on the background of a tricolour flag. At the head of the editorial was a *sans culotte* leaning on a pen instead of a pike. The martial image resurfaces in the motto of the journal: "comme celui de Valmy *Le Volontaire* '36 lutte contre la tyrannie des agents de l'étranger pour la liberté et la nouvelle France".

¹⁵⁶ *Le Volontaire* '36, 24-2-1939.

¹⁵⁷ Of 23 known titles of the PSF press, there were only two which contained an explicit reference to the Revolution.

¹⁵⁸ E. Herriot, *Lyon n'est plus*, Lyon, 1939, especially introduction.

The enemies of France were both internal and external. The PSF must, of course, be seen in the context of the rising international tension after 1936, but internal and external politics cannot be separated. Like the rest of the French right the PSF rejected the notion of a war in defence of democracy. France should fight only if directly threatened. For this reason the PSF denied the universalism of the Jacobins. The idea that France had a mission to save the world for liberty and justice was a manoeuvre of the communists, who aimed to use the cry of "La patrie en danger!" in order to imprison and shoot their enemies. It follows from this that the communist claim to represent the nation, expressed through the Popular Front, was a false one. Their leaders, it was said, acted only on the orders of Stalin, the "Tsar of Russia".¹⁵⁹ The soldiers of the Revolution, in the hands of the PSF, became xenophobic.¹⁶⁰



Figure 2

If the communists were the agents of a foreign power, then the link detected by them between the patriotism of 1793 and class struggle, must also be false. The oath of July 14 1935 which had sealed the formation of the Popular Front had represented a theft of the *fête nationale* in order to divide the nation.¹⁶¹ The true intentions of the crowd on 14 July had been to "bouter l'étranger hors des frontières".¹⁶² This idea can also be seen in Figure 2.

In the hands of the PSF the Revolution was put to use as a means of promoting class collaboration and national unity, and of undermining the Popular Front. But the

¹⁵⁹ *Le Volontaire* '36, 25-3-1937. This is why the PSF made heroes of the soldiers of Valmy, not of Barrès's Napoleon, for the former had merely defended French soil.

¹⁶⁰ *Le Volontaire* '36, 9-5-1937. This is the opposite of the Maurrassian idea according to which the crowd which took the Bastille had been composed of Freemasons, Jews and "métèques".

¹⁶¹ *Le Volontaire* '36, 14-7-1939.

¹⁶² *Le Volontaire* '36, 9-5-1937.

Revolutionary image must also be interpreted in the context of the PSF's radical conservatism. The PSF believed the Revolution to be incomplete. A new movement was to be directed against parliamentarians. When in July 1939 Daladier prorogued Parliament, *Le Volontaire* '36 compared the deputies to a feudal class "dont le mandat n'est qu'une charge lucrative", entirely from the control of electors, who were "taillable et corvéable à merci".¹⁶³

The PSF also agreed with the communists upon the need for an "economic '89", on condition that it was a national movement directed against "international finance".¹⁶⁴ In ideological terms, paradoxically, the target was "le libéralisme économique, doctrine chère aux radicaux et aux vieux partis modérés, issus les uns et les autres de la révolution bourgeoise et non sociale de 1789", which had permitted, thanks to excessive individualism, the domination of the "trusts".¹⁶⁵ Implicitly, and somewhat unjustly in view of that party's evolution under Victor Perret, the PSF identified the Federation with 1789, liberalism, big capital and hence with the enemies of the nation. In this the PSF drew upon and distorted Christian democratic thought, which had long argued for the completion of the political democracy derived from 1789 with social democracy. This is another example of continuities between the centre right and the PSF.

In contrast to La Rocque, who carefully erased the Terror from his view of the Revolution, the Lyonnais PSF identified themselves with the Jacobins against 1789.¹⁶⁶ On the 150th anniversary of the storming of the Bastille in 1939 *Le Volontaire* '36 celebrated the legend of the soldiers of the Year II with a piece which reveals much about the self-image of the PSF. The Convention had not saved France with an improvised army, motivated solely by revolutionary élan. At the beginning the soldiers had been "spoiled by politics". It had been necessary to replace "political" generals with true soldiers like Hoche and Bonaparte. Volunteers were disciplined by veterans in the *demi-brigades*. The result was: "héros sans peur et sans reproche, désintéressés, méprisants les récompenses pécuniaire qu'ils jugent indignes d'eux, les soldats de l'An II sont rassasiés par la discipline au point d'endurer sans broncher les plus cruelles souffrances". The piece goes on to imply that revolutionary justice was acceptable where the interests of the nation were at stake.¹⁶⁷ Here we meet another theme of the PSF: if France is to resist Hitler then the country must first undergo a moral revolution.

The PSF saw itself as a battle-hardened national elite, able by implication to regenerate France. It is interesting to note that the Jacobin reference was particularly

¹⁶³ *Le Volontaire* '36, 4-8-1939.

¹⁶⁴ *Le Volontaire* '36, 14-7-1939.

¹⁶⁵ *Le Volontaire* '36, 14-7-1939.

¹⁶⁶ For La Rocque's view see *Le Petit journal*, 14-7-1939.

¹⁶⁷ *Le Volontaire* '36, 14-7-1939. Thus Saint Just and Lebas were correct to have shot a soldier who had stolen eggs from a farmyard.

marked in the EVP, whose insignia was a reproduction of Rude's Marseillaise. On one occasion the EVP of the 3rd arrondissement presented a tableaux, in which they dressed up as *sans culottes*.¹⁶⁸ It is also possible that the EVP were recruited from families with a Radical background.¹⁶⁹ Formed essentially of young lower middle and working class males, the pseudo-Jacobin mythology of the EVP can be seen also as a reassertion of masculinity in the turmoil of the Popular Front. This was the other side of the PSF's relatively tolerant attitude to female involvement in politics.¹⁷⁰ In this there is also a reversal of the counter-revolutionary view, in which France was depicted in terms of suffering femininity and the revolutionaries as lecherous brutes.¹⁷¹ Indeed, in the symbolism of the PSF, even Joan of Arc was masculinized—a “male lesson” for the mass of Frenchmen too selfish to think of their country.¹⁷²

The Jacobin vocabulary of the PSF was not confined to the pages of *Le Volontaire* '36. On occasion, moreover, it was successful in winning over a part of the Radical electorate. Such may have been the case in the canton of St Laurent, where PSF and Federation confronted each other in the local elections of October 1937. On the one hand the Federation candidate, the ex-officer Alexandre La Batie, had been approved by all but one of the canton's mayors—the classic alliance of landowners and peasant notables on which the Federation depended in the mountains.¹⁷³ La Batie also echoed the themes of the Federation: hierarchy, hard work, self-denial, family, motherland, property and religion. The appeal of the PSF was altogether more populist, mixing Jacobin rhetoric with the themes of the veterans' movement:

Vous vous dites Ancien Combattant, dites plutôt officier de l'Active Combattant, payé avant, pendant la guerre et après; muni d'une retraite de plusieurs dizaines de mille francs. Ce n'est pas l'ancien poilu gagnant 5 sous par jour. Non, qu'il n'y ait pas d'équivoque, vous êtes un Combattant et non pas ce qu'on appelle un Ancien Combattant.

Vous vous dites que vous défendez les agriculteurs, et vous écrivez «Place aux humbles», mais par votre candidature vous ne prouvez que votre désir d'écraser avec moi les petits et les humbles.

This kind of appeal connected with the anti-elitism of both Radicals and of peasants influenced by the JAC. La Batie responded by accusing the PSF of fascism and by placing the party on an equal footing with the communists.¹⁷⁴ Alexandre Bosse-Platière protested that in the Federation “nous n'avons pas d'uniformes, pas de brassards, nous n'avons jamais défilés, nous ne sommes pas des sans culottes, nous sommes des sans chemises multicolores”.¹⁷⁵

To sum up, the pseudo-Jacobin rhetoric of the PSF was designed to detach a part of the Radical electorate from the Popular Front and to give expression to the

¹⁶⁸ *Le Volontaire* '36, 13-1-1938.

¹⁶⁹ The two individuals I interviewed who had been associated with the EVP claimed that prior to June 1936 they had voted for the Radicals.

¹⁷⁰ See page 348.

¹⁷¹ *La République lyonnaise*, 25-2-1939.

¹⁷² *Le Volontaire* '36, 5-5-1939.

¹⁷³ *Union républicaine*, 9-1-1938, 16-1-1938, 17-4-1938.

¹⁷⁴ *Volontaire* '36, 28-1-1938.

¹⁷⁵ *Volontaire* '36, letter of 8-12-1937.

anti-establishment impulses of those who saw themselves as a new elite, destined to save the nation. The same discourse also contained this radicalism, preventing it from turning into an all-out attack on the social system. Jacobin egalitarianism was corrected by the notion of an hierarchical society led by an elite chosen on the basis of service to the nation. Thus in the above tract, the “humble” are identified with unreflectingly obedient conscript soldiers, and the primacy of the nation over material interest thereby reasserted. Anti-capitalism too was limited by the identification of the “trusts” with a cosmopolitan clique, and by presenting class struggle as the work of foreign agents. But just as the PSF's corporatism and devotion to the *classes moyennes* was compromised by the defence of special interests, so the party's Jacobin discourse was undermined by the religious issue.

The PSF and the Church

If the PSF was to present itself as Jacobin then it was essential that it should not be seen as clerical. Portrayal of Hoche as a defender of la patrie rather than as the “butcher of the Vendée” reveals that the PSF wished to cut itself off from the counter-revolutionary right.¹⁷⁶ Like the *Croix de Feu*, and in accordance with its mission of reconciliation, the PSF declared itself to be above the religious divide. The PSF would respect all beliefs, including atheism, on condition that they not be exploited for political purposes. In the view of Canat de Chizy Catholicism alone was insufficient to hold society together. Only the “mystique *Croix de Feu*”, which had been born in the trenches, could bind together rich and poor.¹⁷⁷ Yet the PSF also anticipated the modern far right, as well as owing something to Maurras, in purporting to defend a civilization which was inevitably Christian.¹⁷⁸ The PSF's attempts to place itself above the religious divide, however, were less and less successful.

On the face of it the religious question seemed to be losing some of its capacity to divide. The Church-state issue was not raised during the election campaign. The Popular Front attempted to reach out beyond the constituency of the traditional left. In a radio address on the eve of polling in April the communist leader Maurice Thorez offered his hand to Catholic workers and peasants. Once in power Léon Blum attempted to engage in a dialogue with the Papacy and in a interview with *Sept* suggested that Christian morality could be the basis of collaboration between Catholics and the Popular Front.¹⁷⁹ Edouard Herriot made a celebrated trip to the Holy land.

Yet at the same time as the left was attempting to build bridges to Catholics, the identity between Catholicism and the right became more absolute than ever. Like the Orleanists of 1848, many anti-clericals discovered the value of Catholicism as a

¹⁷⁶ See page 371.

¹⁷⁷ *Le Volontaire* '36, 14-5-1937.

¹⁷⁸ *Le Volontaire* '36, 28-5-1937.

¹⁷⁹ Paul Christophe, 1936. *Les catholiques et le Front populaire*, Paris, 1980; R. Rémond, *Les Catholiques, le communisme et les crises*, Paris, 1960.

prop of the social order. The most spectacular demonstration of this “new spirit” was the signature in 1939 of a parliamentary motion denouncing the Lay Laws by a number of Radicals.¹⁸⁰ The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936 further reinforced the link between Catholicism and hostility to the Popular Front.

For the PSF in consequence it became ever more difficult to maintain its neutral attitude to religion, for Catholicism and anti-communism appeared more and more to be two sides of the same coin. Canat de Chizy, in the same article in which he argued for the primacy of the “mystique *Croix de Feu*”, also reminded his readers that Catholicism was a useful buttress of a necessarily inegalitarian social order, because of its “sanctions terribles contre ceux qui contriendrait sa loi formelle”.¹⁸¹ Spain too was a source of difficulty. At first the PSF rarely mentioned Catholicism in this context, arguing instead that Franco should be supported because of his anti-communist struggle and because the French national interest demanded allies in the Mediterranean.¹⁸² But the PSF had to contend with the fact that perhaps the majority of its members also read the *Nouvelliste*, for which Franco was a holy warrior.

A turning point in the PSF's attitude came in April 1937 with the murder of a young boy by a gang of children in the Croix Rousse.¹⁸³ Here too the *Nouvelliste* played a crucial role in stirring up public opinion. It was reported that the victim, a member of a well-known Catholic family, had been returning home after purchasing a lottery ticket in aid of Catholic education. Of course the incident was linked to the Popular Front and to Spain.¹⁸⁴ The PSF could hardly stand aside from such hysteria, all the more so as the boy's father was a party member. *Le Volontaire* '36 reported that “comme Tharcisius il a été lapidé par les ennemis de la religion”.¹⁸⁵ During the affair the PSF was obliged to restate several times its own support for Catholicism. Afterwards the religious reference in PSF discourse became more explicit. One edition of *Le Volontaire* '36 was headed “La civilisation chrétienne en péril”. The editorial detected the same alliance in France of materialist socialism, Radical Freemasonry and godless communism which had devastated the churches and convents of Spain.

Another reason for the confessionalization of the PSF was that although certain leaders of both left and right had for different reasons sought to find common ground on the religious question, the rank and file were not always ready to follow. Indeed, in the Rhône there seems to have been something of a backlash on the part of some Radicals. The Rhône federation of the latter voted a motion condemning those Radicals who had called for revision of the Lay Laws.¹⁸⁶ Since the parliamentary

180 Berstein, *Histoire du Parti radical*, pp. 484-6.

181 *Le Volontaire* '36, 14-5-1937.

182 For example, *Le Volontaire* '36, 24-2-1939.

183 See page 349.

184 *Nouvelliste*, 24-4-1937 and following issues. The *Nouvelliste* went as far as to publish the details of the autopsy.

185 *Le Volontaire* '36, 30-4-1937.

186 Berstein, *Histoire du parti radical*, p. 486.

motion in question had been proposed by a PSF deputy the result was a polemic with the PSF.¹⁸⁷ Meanwhile, those who stood to lose most from the Radicals' changing attitude to the Church, the *Instituteurs laïque du Rhône*, called for a renewal of anti-clericalism in a much publicised conference at Belleville.¹⁸⁸ At the same time the growth of the CFTC, its growing hostility to the CGT, and the hierarchy's efforts to prevent deconfessionalization of Catholic unions (never in any case a serious danger) re-emphasized the importance of Catholicism to the white collar constituency of the right.

It might at first sight be supposed that the growing conviction on the right that religion was essential to social order, and the attraction of some Radicals to this view, had at last laid to rest a major source of division within the French bourgeoisie. Catholicism and conservatism appeared to coincide. 1936 was indeed a significant turning point. Yet to adopt this point of view would be to neglect the deep conflicts within Catholicism, and the way in which these conflicts were related to conservative politics. The decline of Christian democracy after June and the growing power of the Catholic right should not obscure this. In the polarized atmosphere of the Popular Front social Catholics turned to the right, but their opposition to the Catholic establishment was not reduced.

We have seen that the PSF owed a debt to social Catholicism. Militants like Jacques Darodes and Philippe Andriot had been involved in the *Chronique*. Canat de Chizy, once President of USIC, claimed that Papal encyclicals were the foundation of the PSF's corporatist ideas.¹⁸⁹ On many occasions *Le Volontaire* '36 argued that Catholic Action pursued the same ends as the PSF.¹⁹⁰ Examples of this type could be multiplied. The main point, however, is that as the PSF perfected its electoral programme people like Canat were given more opportunity to develop their views. For such people social questions could not be conceived separately from religious issues. Thus the PSF agricultural spokesman, influenced by the JAC, saw modernization of agriculture both as a means of putting a stop to the rural exodus and to defend a rural Christian civilization against the communists. Modernization could be achieved only through application of Catholic ideas on reform of agricultural syndicates, for which reason it would be necessary first to restore religion to state schools; Catholic France could be saved only by preserving the peasantry.¹⁹¹ All Catholics would have agreed with the latter. But not everyone agreed with the need to reform organizations like the USE. In other words, Catholicism was not simply the tool of an

187 *Le Volontaire* '36, 16-6-1939.

188 *Union républicaine*, 30-4-1939.

189 *Le Volontaire* '36, 11-3-1938.

190 *Le Volontaire* '36, 30-7-1937.

191 *Le Volontaire* '36, 9-4-1937, 4-6-1937, 15-7-1938.

homogeneous right, but an ideological battleground. Hence Canat's claim that it was the PSF, not Victor Perret, which best reflected the Church's social teachings.¹⁹²

The PSF and the right

After June 1936 conservatives of all tendencies called for unity. Typical was the *Nouvelliste's* appeal for the formation of a "compact mass of citizens" determined to obstruct the path of revolution: "nous avons eu trop d'associations et de partis, poursuivant d'ailleurs des buts louables; il n'en faut plus qu'un seul aujourd'hui. In the short term the *Nouvelliste* saw the PSF, along with the Senate, as the only barrier to revolution.¹⁹³ But ultimately the *Nouvelliste* hoped for a reversal of majorities in Parliament. It therefore envisaged conservative unity in terms of an alliance of existing parties, together with a new movement grouping people from all parties.¹⁹⁴

Victor Perret, worried by the rise of the PSF, put forward a similar proposal in September, and indirectly criticized the PSF for sowing discord on the right.¹⁹⁵ Conflict came into the open in November when the PSF won a Conseil d'arrondissement seat from the Federation in the 2nd arrondissement. The Federation candidate had withdrawn in favour of the PSF. But the election over, Victor Perret regretted that there had not been a single conservative candidate.¹⁹⁶ The JP and royalists also took the side of the Federation, the latter going as far as to publish the Federation's election address.¹⁹⁷

Relations between the PSF and the rest of the right began to deteriorate nationally in the spring of 1937. As in Lyon there were quarrels over by-elections.¹⁹⁸ Then in March Jacques Doriot proposed a *Front de la liberté*, an alliance stretching from his own PPF to anti-Popular Front Radicals. The Front was officially launched in May. It would have a minimum programme, otherwise leaving parties free to pursue their own ideas. Crucially, participants would not put up candidates in seats held by other members of the Front.¹⁹⁹ The PSF rejected an initiative that it rightly saw as an attempt to neutralize it. But Victor Perret welcomed a proposal which matched so closely his own views, declaring that nothing could be achieved without the respect of "situations acquises".²⁰⁰ A further round of polemics ensued. The temperature was

192 *Le Volontaire* '36, 26-11-1937. Similarly Canat said that what was most disappointing about the Federation was that "parmi leur électorat se trouvent la majorité des Catholiques. Or, il n'y a rien de plus opposé à la doctrine sociale de l'Église que ce conservatisme libéral". (*Volontaire* '36, 26-11-1937).

193 ADR 4m 236, 24-8-1936, 22-9-1936. In the summer of 1936 the PSF was the only right wing party in the Rhône which showed any sign of life. *Nouvelliste*, 16-7-1937.

194 *Nouvelliste*, 24-7-1936.

195 *Union républicaine*, 6-8-1936.

196 *Union républicaine*, 15-11-1936.

197 Since the summer *La République lyonnaise* had been regretting the profusion of parties: "Il y a ceux qui disent que la République ne va pas bien! Si! elle va très bien au contraire. Il n'y a jamais eu autant de partis. Il en sort tous les jours de nouveau. Ils ne rompent pas même avec la tradition républicaine et démocratique qui est de se taper dessus mutuellement!"

198 The best known was at Mortain (Calvados) in April. See Irvine, op. cit., pp. 138-144.

199 P. Machefer, "L'Union des droites, le PSF et la Front de la liberté", RHMC, 17, 1970, pp. 112-126. Irvine, op. cit., pp. 147-9.

200 *Union républicaine*, 23-5-1937, 30-5-1937, 6-6-1937.

raised further when in July the dissident *Croix de Feu* Pozzo di Borgo, alleged that when Prime Minister in 1930 André Tardieu had subsidized the *Croix de Feu* out of government funds.²⁰¹ At a meeting in Lyon La Rocque denounced Pozzo. Thanks to the error of a local member La Rocque's comments found their way into the press. As a result Pozzo sued La Rocque for defamation. In September the Lyonnais public were treated to the spectacle of conservative worthies dismantling each others' reputations in a highly publicized trial.

This was not the best preparation for the local elections of November 1937. On the national level the main parties of the right concluded an agreement to present a single candidate in each constituency—known as the *Républicains social anti-communiste* (RSAC).²⁰² In the Rhône negotiations began in May; agreement was announced in August.²⁰³ The upshot was that PSF candidates were confined mainly to seats held by the left. In compensation the *Fédération conseiller d'arrondissement* in the canton of St Laurent stood down, leaving the way open for the PSF. There was much discontent within the PSF.²⁰⁴ It is indeed surprising that the PSF should have accepted such an inequitable arrangement. The most likely explanation was that the party had been deluded by the presence of a minority of ex-Radicals amongst its militants into thinking that it could win seats from the left. Hence the party's insistence on being allowed to stand in Edouard Herriot's constituency.²⁰⁵ In the end PSF members were disciplined. Those of the *Fédération* were less so. The main conflict centred on St Laurent, where Alexandre La Batie stood against the PSF candidate. La Batie was vaguely disowned by Victor Perret, but won narrowly.

The PSF — *Fédération* conflict was not the only problem, for there were a record number of dissident candidates on the right.²⁰⁶ Laurent Bonnevey's supporters refused the patronage of the RSAC. The PDP split publicly when one of its members urged support for Edouard Herriot. *Lyon républicain* commented "La bataille des élections cantonales est marquée dans le camp des réactionnaires, par l'étalement au grand jour des rivalités de clans et des déchirements internes".²⁰⁷

Thanks to the decline of the Radicals in the countryside, a product of long-term social changes, the right won two seats on the *Conseil*. In consequence the Radicals were eliminated from the majority in the *Conseil général*, which now shifted to the right. But in the wake of the elections intra-conservative relations declined to a new

201 P. Machefer and F. Kupferman, "Presse et politique dans les années trente: le cas du Petit Journal", *RHMC*, 22, 1975, pp. 7-53. Howlett, *op. cit.*, pp. 248-264.

202 See Howlett, *op. cit.*, pp. 264-7.

203 *Le Volontaire* '36, 27-8-1937.

204 *Lyon républicain*, 1-10-1937, reported that Robert Poiget, the PSF *arrondissement* councillor in the 2nd, had wanted to stand for the *conseil général*.

205 *Le Volontaire* '36, 25-2-1938.

206 For example, the old champion of the centre right in Villefranch, Ernest Planche, stood against the PSF. The moderate ex-Deputy J-B. Delorme was defeated by an RSAC candidate, to the delight of the *Nouvelliste*.

207 *Lyon républicain*, 2-10-1937. A few weeks later in *Union républicaine*, 28-11-1937, Victor Perret wrote, "les partis nationaux [...] ne connurent jamais de crise aussi profonde et aussi douloureuse que celle dont nous souffrons en ce moment".

low. For the PSF the elections had been a fiasco. Thanks to La Batie's victory in St Laurent the party won no seats. Its failure to bite into the Radical electorate was plain.²⁰⁸ The great effort made by the PSF in Herriot's constituency could not prevent the ex-Prime Minister from increasing his share of the vote. A lengthy and ill-tempered controversy over the significance of the result ensued. Victor Perret wrote a series of nine editorials in *L'Union républicaine* attacking the PSF. The nadir came in February 1938 with the break up of Herriot's meeting by the PSF.²⁰⁹ Since the elections had been a disappointment nationally for the PSF the party resolved that it would henceforth put up candidates of its own in all constituencies. As a result every by-election in France and the Rhône was the cause of polemic.

There is here much evidence to support William Irvine's contention that the conflict between the Federation and the PSF was essentially electoral.²¹⁰ Had the PSF followed the *Croix de Feu* in remaining aloof from the electoral process then differences between the two movements could surely have been contained. The Federation's support for an "alliance des chefs" was also clearly related to its desire for self-preservation. But W. Irvine is on less safe ground when he argues that there were no programmatic differences between the two parties. There are two main problems with this view. The first is that W. Irvine accepts at face value the assertions of Federation members like Victor Perret that the PSF had stolen its programme from the old right. Given that Perret wished to preserve his own position he had an interest in making this claim.²¹¹ The second problem is that W. Irvine confines his attention to the labour question, where neither the Federation, the PSF, nor indeed the PPF differed.²¹²

So in what sense was there a programmatic conflict between PSF and Federation. We have seen that the PSF saw itself as a "national opposition". For Johannès Dupraz, "Le conservatisme français échoua devant le triple problème de la Paix, de la Crise et de la Réforme sociale". In June 1936, said the PSF, conservatives reaped the

208 See Chapter 11.

209 See page 354.

210 Irvine, op. cit., chapter 5.

211 In private the Federation was perhaps more honest. Louis Marin said that if the PSF programme resembled that of the PSF on the majority of points, "il y a un certain nombre de points qui restent volontairement imprécis et qui marquent une démagogie croissante, une orientation à gauche dont la Fédération se fait gloire de n'avoir voulu à aucun moment" AN 317 AP 82, *conseil national* of 4-11-1936). Similarly Jean Guiter privately accused La Rocque of turning towards the Radicals (AN 317 AP 28-2-1939). We have seen that the PSF's efforts to win over the Radicals meant separating their anti-capitalism from democracy, but this does not deprive the evidence of its force.

212 It would be tedious to compare programmes in detail. Suffice it to say that the PSF sometimes condemned those who opposed social reform. In fact no-one opposed the principle of social reform. An example is the Forty Hour Law. Like the patronat the PSF did not oppose the law in principle. But it did argue that it should have been implemented without salary increases, and claimed that hours legislation disrupted the Taylorization of factories. Government "aménagement" of the law was criticized on the grounds that it did not go far enough (*Le Volontaire* '36, 8-10-1937, 1-7-1938, 15-1-1938). The PSF also echoed patronal sentiments on the control of hiring and firing (*Le Volontaire* '36, 28-7-1937). Like the patronat the PSF approved collective contracts as long as they were not national (*Le Volontaire* '36, 1-12-1936). Like the patronat and the rest of the right the PSF favoured mutualization of social insurance. Its call for a minimum wage was not as P. Milza believes a leftist position. Rather it meant a minimum wage to be set by region and profession, which would be calculated by corporations dominated by engineers and bosses.

harvest they had sown.²¹³ Business leaders too, “les mauvais patrons”, would have to share the blame for June.²¹⁴ In the eyes of the PSF these two groups of guilty men had in common their commitment to liberalism, a creed which permitted the strong to crush “les petits”. Their nationalism was merely a cover for self-interest.²¹⁵ The mission of the PSF was to sweep away this failed elite. Detached from economic interests, the PSF represented “l’élite sociale nouvelle, qui secoue les vieux cadres bourgeois”.²¹⁶ For these reasons the PSF argued that the defeat of the Popular Front could not come about simply through a parliamentary alliance such as the *Front de la liberté*, but must be achieved “in the country itself”.²¹⁷ So far we have a political conflict which is compatible with the Irvine thesis, though it is clear that there was more at stake than mere electoral advantage.

The PSF’s identification of the Federation with the business establishment was to some extent unfair. The Federation had been viewed unfavourably by big business since the early 1930’s. What is more, we have seen that the Federation was ambiguous in its attitude to liberalism. But that the PSF’s enemy was to some extent symbolic should not obscure the ideological and social opposition between the PSF and Federation. Although both *Croix de Feu* and PSF claimed to be above sectional interests, we saw in Chapter eleven that both nevertheless attracted the support of particular groups—from employers in the engineering industry to white collar workers, engineers and peasants influenced by social Catholicism—all of which had a history of opposition to the conservative “establishment”. We have also seen that in the PSF the imprint of individuals raised in the social Catholic tradition became ever more visible. There was, for example, no equivalent in the Federation press of the detailed discussions in *Le Volontaire* ’36 of issues like the nature of the corporate state, the place of cadres in society or of the need to reform old-fashioned agricultural unions. For Canat, the roots of the Federation’s hostility to the PSF lay in “la peur insurmontable que cause le futur Etat social français qui saura n’en doutons jamais, sous peu de temps, instaurer en France, transformer la République des profiteurs, des tarés, des compromis, des viveurs en un état propre et net”.²¹⁸

The profundity of the conflict between the PSF and the Federation becomes clearer if we remember that after June 1936 the Federation became more than ever a party of Catholic landowners and the old bourgeoisie. The willingness of Victor Perret to share platforms after June 1936 with royalists, who recruited in the same milieu, is one indication of this.²¹⁹ Another is that the party was best able to resist the PSF in

²¹³ *Le Volontaire* ’36, 29-4-1938.

²¹⁴ *Le Volontaire* ’36, 22-10-1937.

²¹⁵ *Le Volontaire* ’36, 15-1-1937.

²¹⁶ *Le Volontaire* ’36, 15-10-1937.

²¹⁷ *Le Volontaire* ’36, 28-5-1937.

²¹⁸ *Le Volontaire* ’36, 26-11-1937.

²¹⁹ *Le Volontaire* ’36, 1-12-1936, reported that the royalist *Lugdunum* group had distributed tracts during the 2nd arrondissement by-election, which spoke of “les droits du premier occupant”.

the 4th and 7th arrondissements of Lyon, where these elites were linked to the masses by the *Oeuvre des cercles*.

The importance of traditional Catholicism to the Federation can be seen in the interest it showed in a Congrès marial held in 1939, just as the PSF were preparing to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Revolution. Festivities lasted for four days, beginning with the arrival of Madonnas from all the parishes of the diocese, and including immense open air services, and a reconstruction of the arrival of the missionary St. Pothin in Lyon. Victor Perret recognized in the congress an image of the world as it ought to be.²²⁰ There was, he said, no discord and no counter-demonstration. On the contrary, the whole city was united in witnessing "a magnificent religious drama". Persons of all classes participated, and were motivated by the spirit of collaboration which softened the life of the less privileged. They were united "dans un acte de foi, guidés et entraînés par leur chefs hiérarchiques".²²¹

Of course, Perret had in mind communist subversion. But it is not surprising that those who viewed the world in this way saw the PSF too as a threat. Partly, as William Irvine argues, this was because the better organized PSF posed an electoral threat to the Federation. Ironically, militants like Bosse-Platière, who had at one time denounced François Peissel for ignoring the wishes of party militants, now preached the virtues of informal organization: "Chez nous il y a un président qui nous traite en collaborateurs et amis".²²² But Bosse-Platière's statement implies too that a whole set of social and ideological relations that were under threat.

Victor Perret tried to pretend that nothing divided Federation and PSF. Yet as relations between the two parties deteriorated, other points of view were expressed. An anonymous writer in *Union républicaine* described those responsible for the previously mentioned Etoile Cinéma incident thus: "les vestes de cuir, les foulards tapageurs et les casquettes de Villeurbanne [of the PSF] semblaient s'être venus se mêler aux cols cassés du bon quartier d'Ainay". Yet this proletarian air was mere affectation.²²³ The PSF leaders were "un pharmacien dévoué, entraîné aux combats de rue et aux violences électorales, [Knersynski] [et] un pâle bourgeois d'Ainay, honteux de son nom, — un de ces arrivistes sans espoir qui pensent toujours fournir double caution pour l'ambition d'abord, pour leur pusillanimité ensuite".²²⁴ This reveals the gap in political culture between Federation and PSF. It also reminds us of reminds us

220 ADR 4m 236, 4-7-1939. A police report suggests, that in the milieux of the "vieille bourgeoisie catholique" some were shocked by this kind of popular mobilization. I found no evidence to support this view, but it is not implausible.

221 *Union républicaine*, 1-7-1939.

222 *Union républicaine*, 8-7-1937. Similarly Pierre Burgeot refused to join the PSF parliamentary group on the grounds that he could not accept blind party discipline (AN 451 AP, 26-6-1936, quoted by Howlett, op. cit., p. 228).

223 It is interesting to compare this with the left's view of PSF activists. According to *Le Démocrate*, 2-10-1937, one could recognize PSF members by their "casquesttes trop neuves et l'incohérence de leurs propos".

224 The first named is Jean Knersynski, the previously mentioned Vaise pharmacist. The second was perhaps Jean Madignier, a 35 year old lawyer resident in the rue Sala (2nd) and born in Lyon. He was responsible for PSF propaganda in the Rhône.

of Joseph Rambaud's contemptuous dismissal of Republican parvenus in the 1880s, and of the debt owed by Perret's Federation to this strand in the Lyonnais right.²²⁵

Other militants saw the PSF as subversive. Alexandre Bosse-Platière denounced a movement of *sans culottes*,²²⁶ and claimed that the regimentation of thousands of men in the service of a "mystique" and in total devotion to a leader was a "fétichisme qui peut conduire aux pires excès et au pires erreurs".²²⁷ Guy de Saint-Laumer believed that the exhibition of monster portraits of La Rocque and the holding of tempestuous demonstrations prepared the way for the communists.²²⁸ Alexandre La Batie claimed during the local elections, that that "le canton de St. Laurent qui s'est toujours défendu contre le COMMUNISME, se défende aussi contre le FASCISME".²²⁹

Leaving aside our own doubts about the fascism of the PSF, it might be objected that such views were expressed only after the PSF became an electoral threat to the Federation, and that the Federation's own attitude to the Republic was ambiguous. Such views could therefore be regarded as opportunistic.²³⁰ Indeed, the Federation's links with other leagues were reinforced. The Federation merged with the PRNS (formerly the JP) in May 1937.²³¹ In order to fight off the PSF in the St. Laurent election, Alexandre La Batie posed as the champion of the *Défense paysan* of Dorgères. The Federation also collaborated with the PPF in the *Front de la Liberté*. Most successfully, Federation and PPF joined together in promoting the *Union militaire française*, an organization founded in 1938 by the ex-Cagoulard, Loustenau-Lacau, and which was dedicated to the suppression of the Communist Party.

In view of such contacts, it is indeed probable that had the PSF not posed an electoral threat to the Federation, then the views quoted above would not have been expressed. Yet it still has to be explained why the Federation denounced the PSF in this particular way. The answer is that, as we have seen, the Federation had always been suspicious of leagues of any type, especially in private.²³² The Federation had been particularly suspicious of *Défense paysan*, but it was relatively safe for La Batie to collaborate with it because the movement was not established in the department. The Federation was forced to pay attention to the leagues, but it attempted to contain them, partly by encouraging them to keep out of electoral politics.

225 See Chapter 2.

226 See page 372.

227 *Le Volontaire* '36, 22-4-1938.

228 *Union républicaine*, 13-3-1938.

229 Tract, reprinted in *Volontaire* '36, 728-1-1938.

230 Irvine, op. cit., p. 154, n. 49.

231 *Union républicaine*, 6-6-1937. Perret said "nous assistons se soir à une mariage, je dirai même que nous régularisons une situation". This was part of an abortive national move towards merger (Irvine, op. cit., p. 130).

232 See Chapter 8.

Conclusion

Like the *Croix de Feu* the PSF portrayed itself as a national opposition. Party militants saw themselves as a new elite forged in struggle. They were ready to sweep away an egotistical political class, to dispose of the communist threat and to restore the national unity essential if France were to hold its own in international politics. Yet whereas the *Croix de Feu* had spurned electoralism and brandished the threat of violence, the PSF increasingly placed the emphasis upon winning a majority in Parliament. The paramilitarism of the *Croix de Feu* was gradually, though not completely, abandoned.²³³ For these reasons the PSF cannot be described as fascist, though its conservatism remained radical, authoritarian and populist. Had the war not intervened it is possible that the PSF might have evolved into a conventional conservative party.

The reason for this change of tack was the defeat of June 1936. The victory of the Popular Front, the strikes and the perceived unreliability of the police made a violent show-down with the left appear very risky. It was widely believed on the right that the methods of the *Croix de Feu* had served only to cement the unity of the Popular Front. For this reason the disaggregation of the Popular Front did not lead to a revival of paramilitarism. The far right in France did not carry out the kind of attacks upon a defeated and divided left that had occurred in Italy and Germany.

Yet the tensions within society at large and within the right which had led to the growth of the leagues remained. In some respects they were aggravated by the Popular Front. Therefore the less authoritarian stance of the PSF, its participation in electoral process and the denting of La Rocque's authority as a result of the Tardieu affair, compromised the party's ability to present itself as above social, ideological and political divisions. The result was increased conflict between conservative parties. Even in the face of a massive challenge on the part of the left the French right was unable to unite. Had the elections of 1940 taken place faction fighting would probably have reached new heights. The PSF planned to present candidates against sitting Federation deputies.²³⁴ The centre right had its eye on Federation seats in the 6th and 2nd arrondissements.²³⁵

In other parts of France the right was consoled by the increasingly conservative stance of the Radicals. Yet the Radicals found it as difficult as any other group to escape the sectionalism of French politics. Serge Bernstein shows that Radicalism in the 1930s ceased to regard itself as a "parti de gouvernement" and instead became a lobby for sections of the lower middle class.²³⁶ In the Rhône political conflict was exacerbated by the fact that Radicalism there did not participate in the shift

²³³ It might be objected that Hitler too had decided upon the parliamentary route to power in the late 1920s. But the Nazis pursued both electoral and paramilitary methods simultaneously.

²³⁴ The lawyer Andriot would probably have stood in the 2nd arrondissement. Joseph Nicolle told me that he had been asked by the PSF in Paris to stand in the 3rd arrondissement.

²³⁵ Fonds Flandin, carton 89.

²³⁶ Bernstein, *Histoire du Parti radical*, ch. 8 and conclusion.

to the right. The local *Jeunesse radicale-socialiste* rejected the proto-fascism of the parent organization. Party militants responded to the competition of the socialists by setting up workplace cells, the *Amicales radical-socialistes*. They were especially strong in the civil service and even the police force and helped to maintain those groups in their centrist tradition. Edouard Herriot set himself up as national leader of those Radicals opposed to the authoritarianism of the Daladier government.²³⁷

Nevertheless, conservatives in the Rhône, as elsewhere in France, had little choice but shelve their doubts about Daladier. Fearful of the left and of the possibility of an “ideological war” against fascism, but too divided to take power for themselves the right from the PDP to the PSF acquiesced in the authoritarian Daladier regime, making a distinction between the patriotism of the Prime Minister and the sectarianism of his party. The Daladier government carried out an offensive against the social laws of 1936, provoked and crushed a General strike, withdrew police powers from communist municipalities, placed Marseille under administrative rule and prorogued Parliament for two years some time before war was certain.

The defeat of France in 1940 may have been primarily due to the ineptitude of the military. But the reasons for the response to defeat must be sought in the disintegration of French politics in the 1930s and before.

²³⁷ Bernstein, *Herriot*, pp. 249-257.

Chapter thirteen

Conclusion

From the turn of the century until the late 1920s the right in the Rhône was dominated by a Catholic and Liberal Progressism which could trace its origins back as far as the Revolution. It was characterized by a commitment to liberal democracy, market economics and free trade and was rooted in the historic association of Lyon with the manufacture of silk textiles, banking and international trade. Fear of the proletariat meant that the Church was seen as a sanction of the liberal order. In consequence Catholicism became crucial to elite self-identification. Through their domination of Chamber of Commerce and *Fédération républicaine*, wealthy families like the Aynards, the Isaacs and the Ribouds ensured that this liberal tradition outlived the relative decline of the silk industry after the Great War. In the early 1920s the USE was also won over to liberal republicanism.

Liberal attitudes were transmitted to white collar workers and even to some workers by the propagation of a semi-myth of the career open to talent. This was particularly true in the silk industry, where many employees worked in close contact with their bosses and where social mobility was relatively common. Status and social mobility were linked in turn to Catholic values, so that a white collar worker could attribute perceived success to having adhered to the austere moral code of the Church. Much the same was true of the peasants on the plateau, where Catholic values could be seen as protecting better off “bonnes familles” against the dangers of subdivision of land.

Progressism was never entirely stable. Even before the war it suffered from internal contradictions. Conservatives like Aynard attempted to incorporate the radicals into the right by placing defence of property above class interest. But because of the way in which Catholicism and conservatism were related in the minds of his supporters this was difficult to achieve——Aynard could not tolerate attacks on the Church. Furthermore, the Church was not a reliable ally. The *Ralliement* helped to unleash a popular conservatism which nourished both the radical right and the *Chronique sociale*.

Progressism was also challenged from outside by groups descended from the Legitimists and intransigent Orleanists. Conservatives of this type were entrenched in Catholic institutions like the *Oeuvre des cercles*. The *Nouvelliste*, read by most of the conservative electorate, combined integral Catholicism, liberalism and suspicion of Republican “new men”. Such ideas found support among landowners in the Beaujolais and the mountains. A few businessmen in the Beaujolais cotton industry

and in the merchant-manufacturing branch of the silk industry were also attracted by traditionalism.

In the 1920s liberal Progressism entered into crisis. In the countryside the loyalty of peasants to notables, whether Progressists or Catholic landowners, began to be undermined. The reasons were that a strengthening of medium peasant proprietors, a more developed peasant sociability and the increasing vulnerability of the peasantry to the market came together with the development of the JAC. In Lyon the hardening of social barriers and the feminization of white collar work coincided with the formation of the CFTC. Both JAC and CFTC promoted an anti-liberal corporatist doctrine.

Meanwhile the diversification of the Lyonnais economy, greatly accelerated by the war, led to the expansion of the engineering industry. Many of the bosses in this industry were recruited from the anti-clerical artisanate, which permitted the development of a double hostility, economic and ideological, to the conservative establishment in Lyon. In the late 1920s engineering employers like Weitz preached the value of industrial expansion and social reform. This represented another challenge to the liberal individualism of the Progressist elites of the *Fédération républicaine*.

These tensions came together in the crisis caused by the reform programme of the conservative governments of 1928 to 1932. Reformism was supported by a loose (and politically ineffective) coalition which included the CFTC, the *Alliance démocratique*, engineering employers, the PDP, and the left wing of the Federation. Some sections of the liberal-silk elite also hesitantly supported reform. Others became somewhat detached from the debate and indeed from the Federation, which had hitherto been their vehicle. Business elites had little sympathy either with reformism or with the tone of the anti-reformists.

Opposition to the reforms was led by Victor Perret and the right wing of the Federation. It drew support from some employers in the merchant manufacturing branch of the silk industry and drew upon the ideological and organizational resources of Catholic integrism, particularly the *Oeuvre des cercles*. Perret's opposition to reformism was anti-liberal and populist in tone. But it must nevertheless be seen as a movement of elite self-defence.

With the onset of the economic crisis and the electoral victory of the Cartel in 1932, Victor Perret's popularity on the right grew. Yet the economic crisis also caused sectional conflicts to be pursued with a new vigour. Institutions came to be identified with narrow special interests. The Chamber of Commerce, once seen as the representative of the general economic interest of the region, was perceived as a lobby for big business in the silk industry. It is true that agreement on corporatism and moderate protectionism now united big business in both the silk and engineering

industries. But medium and small firms, as the fiasco of the entente in the silk industry showed, felt that they had been deprived of a voice in professional affairs. Small business, mainly Radical in sympathy, protested on the streets and flirted with the far right. Medium employers in older branches of the economy expressed their hostility to the establishment through the Federation. Those in the engineering industry voiced their discontent through the *Croix de Feu*. In the latter they met with a mobilization of white collar workers and peasants, who had been prepared for autonomous political action by social Catholicism. In the context of the Rhône, the *Croix de Feu* represented an anti-establishment conservatism.

By 1935 the liberal silk elites were already isolated from the main currents in Lyonnais politics. They had little sympathy either with the Federation of Victor Perret or the *Croix de Feu*. Their only outlet was through the politically ineffective *Alliance démocratique*. As a result of June 1936 the Chamber of Commerce too was marginalized, essentially because it was ill-suited to the conduct of institutionalized industrial relations. The focus of the employers' movement was now AICA, which was dominated by a broader big business group in which the silk industry was merely one element amongst several. As a result of June 1936 some big businessmen now supported the PSF. But their support remained discreet, partly because the party had little prospect of coming to power, but also because the PSF was more and more identified with sectional interests. The PSF was more visibly the party of younger peasants and white collar workers touched by social Catholicism, of engineers influenced by USIC who blamed selfish employers for June and of medium engineering employers. The Federation, in contrast, was more than ever the party of Catholic and traditionalist bourgeois and landowners. By 1939 the Progressist hegemony was all but extinct, though the Lyonnais elites were to turn once again to liberal Republicanism in 1945.

What does the story of the right wing in the Rhône tell us about the history of French conservatism? Why has the French right been unable to form a united party? Why has it been vulnerable to authoritarianism? More precisely, how is the emergence of the leagues of the 1930s to be accounted for? Did they pose a significant threat to the Republic, and were they fascist?

Third Republican conservatism was inherently unstable. We have seen that the French right was divided by two interconnected problems: the desirability or otherwise of industrialization and the religious issue. As a result conservatives often found it difficult to recognize as allies those whose economic position was similar. Many of the anti-clerical fraction of the bourgeoisie were attracted to the left. Those conservatives who spoke of the need to place economics above ideology were likely to be met by incomprehension.

Before World War One these problems were, with some difficulty, contained by the broad appeal of liberal-democratic parliamentarianism. An ideology which was able to incorporate Catholic liberal-conservatives like Edouard Aynard, anti-clerical conservatives like Poincaré, much of the Radical party and even on occasion the socialists. The notion of the Republic as a society of opportunity was capable of incorporating a broad alliance of social groups. It provided a framework in which differences could be resolved by negotiation and compromise.

After the war containment of the tensions in both French society and in conservatism became far more difficult. One reason was the accentuation of the structural imbalance in the French economy. The efforts of some conservatives to build up small producers as a bulwark against post-war labour unrest contrasted with desire of *Redressement français* to win over the working class through social reform. Another reason was the stimulus given by the war to the organization of interest groups. The Church too participated in the development of such lobbies, thereby accentuating the tendency to organize on confessional lines. These developments made it much more difficult for conservative parties to agree among themselves or to represent and synthesize the interests of those groups which supported them. What is more, the formation of so many lobbies, some with official status, implied the weakening of parliament. Coalition politics became evermore difficult. The centre left and right suffered especially from fragmentation because so many pressure groups concentrated their efforts on this strategic location. Already in 1926 it was necessary to resort to special powers in order to resolve crisis.

These problems came together in the reform programme of André Tardieu. His efforts to implement some of the ideas of *Redressement français* led to the kind of reaction from Catholic and "traditionalist" sections of the ruling class typified perhaps by the forgemasters de Warren and de Wendel, that we have seen in the Rhône. In some parts of France the popular constituency of the right were mobilized by the *Ligue des contribuables* and the *Defense paysan*. All of these groups shared a radical populism which looked forward to the leagues. All were radically hostile both to social reform, especially to the Social Insurance Law, and to the political class which it saw as responsible for these measures.

The economic crisis in France did not reach the depths of that in Germany. But it lasted longer and affected the constituency of the right more than that of the left. Most on the right were now united in opposition to further social reform and on the need for deflation. Yet the slump had intensified the conflict of interests groups within the conservative bloc. When the parliamentary right returned to power after the riots of 6th February 1934 it found itself entirely unable to implement the deflationary policy on which all apparently agreed, thanks to the contradictory demands of its supporters. Only special powers permitted anything at all to be done. Even then,

deflation was compromised by a host of measures which worked in a contradictory direction, such as price support for agriculture. The right also failed to deal with the rise of the left. Its divisions over this issue helped prevent it from taking an unambiguous stand on the renewal of the German threat. It was feared that an alliance with Russia would play into the hands of French communists.

The breakdown of the pluralist system of negotiation in civil society, the incapacity of the right, the paralysis of Parliament, and the belief that it was in the hands of sectional interests—especially the CGT—led to a wide interest in authoritarianism. Representatives of the constitutional right like Tardieu demanded the strengthening of the executive. Victor Perret in the Rhône adopted an authoritarian and populist stance and collaborated with anti-parliamentary leagues. The most spectacular manifestation of authoritarianism were leagues like the JP and *Croix de Feu*. They represented a mobilization of the rank and file of the right, made possible by the fragmentation of conservative politics, against failed conservative leaders. The *Croix de Feu* saw themselves as a new elite, ready to reassert the primacy of the national interests and to sweep away sectional interests like the “trusts” and the CGT.

Progressism had resolved conflict by discreet negotiation between notables. Victor Perret sought a monopoly of decision making for established social powers, relying upon religion and authority to keep the masses in line. Reformists like Mercier envisaged formal negotiation between organized interests in a pluralist society. What held the *Croix de Feu*'s vision of the world together was a bogus form of negotiation in a corporatist system, and above all authority. Hence the appeal of the *Croix de Feu*, in Lyon at least, to groups which had previously supported the democratic corporatism of the late 1920s.

The *Croix de Feu* however, had little chance of coming to power. By the time the great expansion of the league had begun in 1934 the cards were already stacked against it. In 1932 and 1933 the situation had been more favourable. The incompetence of the Cartel government in 1932 had caused a revival of anti-parliamentarianism. Sections of the Radical electorate shared in this mood. The extreme right began to revive. The riots of 6 February were approved, for different reasons, by almost every strand of conservative opinion. At this stage the fascist right remained subordinate—most looked to a solution within the existing system. But the seeds of a more serious crisis were present.

The reaction of the left ensured that a full scale fascist crisis did not develop. The effectiveness of anti-fascist action on the streets, proposals for social reforms and above all manipulation of the Republican tradition, deprived the leagues of room for manoeuvre. Indeed, the *Croix de Feu* prospered relative to other leagues partly because of its success in combining mass mobilization with semi-clandestinity. The

rank and file of the radicals were won back to the left. No alliance between conservative establishment and the *Croix de Feu*, essential to the success of fascism, took place. In the circumstances of 1935 bringing la Rocque into the government must have looked a decidedly risky course of action. June 1936 was a major defeat for the leagues, obliging La Rocque to move away from the paramilitary methods of the *Croix de Feu*. But the tensions which had produced the *Croix de Feu* still existed. The right remained authoritarian, turning to Daladier for lack of an alternative. Pétain was viewed more favourably.

The fundamental problems which had plagued the French right persisted under the Vichy regime and beyond. By 1945 most conservatives agreed on the social value of the Church. But the Church was not always willing to act as a tool of the ruling classes, while conservatives continued to struggle over the meaning of Catholicism. In 1945 large sections of the rank and file of the right were mobilized by the *Mouvement républicain populaire*, while discredited conservative elites returned to liberalism and attempted to downplay the religious question. Industrialization also remained an issue. In the elections of 1951 elements of big business attempted to manipulate small producers through the *Groupement de défense des contribuables*. As a result they contributed to the emergence of the anti-capitalist Poujadist movement.¹ Many of these tensions contributed to the collapse of the Fourth Republic in 1958. In the 1960s, under the authoritarian rule of de Gaulle, a stable conservative majority appeared to have emerged, facilitated by the decline of religious practice and by a new consensus on the value of growth. But May 1968, the disappearance of de Gaulle, a new world economic crisis and above all the victory of Mitterand in 1981, demonstrated how shallow this conservative unity remained.

1 R. Vinen, "Big business and the *groupement de défense des contribuables*", unpublished paper, 1990.

Equations for Multiple Regression

Non-winegrowing communes

R ²	.23838	The Right	
Std. Error	.14181	Sig. F	.00000

<u>Variables</u>	T	
Tenants	2.116	.0357
Pop. diff.	2.121	.0353
Wine	-2.474	.0143
Proprietors	1.910	.0578
Retired	1.561	.1203

R ²	.45755	The Radicals	
Std. Error	.09605	Sig. F	.0000

<u>Variables</u>	T	
Pop. diff.	-7.578	.0000
Wine	4.584	.0000
Tenants	-2.984	.0032
Proprietors	2.309	.0221
Labourers	-1.253	.2120

R ²	.32945	The Communists	
Std. Error	.02284	Sig. F	.0000

<u>Variables</u>	T	
Proprietors	-3.391	.0009
Tenants	-3.195	.0016
Density	1.908	.0580
Labourers	-1.780	.0767

Winegrowing communes

Adjusted R ²	.57565	The Right	
Std. Error	.08223	Sig. F	.0000

<u>Variables</u>	T	
Proprietors	2.716	.0093
Coop members	-3.532	.0010
Pop. diff.	-3.946	.0003
Wine	-3.648	.0007

Adjusted R ²	.18885	The Radicals	
Std. Error	.09592	Sig. F	.0073

<u>Variables</u>	T	
Tenants	-1.960	
Pop. diff.	-1.870	

Adjusted R ²	.38145	The SFIO	
Std. Error	.11419	Sig. F	.0015

<u>Variables</u>	T	
Wine	3.231	.0024
Coop	2.107	.0410
Proprietors	2.309	.0364
Labourers	-1.253	.1537
Pop. diff.	-1.802	.0786
Density	-1.502	.1345

Appendix two

The Conservative deputies of the Rhône

1928-1932

Lyon II	Antoine Sallès
l'Arbresle	François Peissel
Givors	Jean-Baptiste Delorme
Tarare	Laurent Bonnevey

1932 to 1936

Lyon II	Antoine Sallès
l'Arbresle	François Peissel
Tarare	Laurent Bonnevey

1936 to 1940

Lyon II	Antoine Sallès
Lyon IV	Alfred Elmigar
Lyon VI	Pierre Burgeot
l'Arbresle	François Peissel
Tarare	Laurent Bonnevey

Constituency boundaries

Constituency	Cantons
Tarare	Tarare, Amplepuis, Thizy, Lamure, Le Bois d'Oingt.
Villefranche	Anse, Villefranche, Beaujeu, Belleville, Monsols
l'Arbresle	Neuville, l'Arbresle, Limonest, St. Laurent, St. Symphorian.
Givors	Vaugneray, St. Genis Laval, Condrieu, Givors.

Appendix three

Unions affiliated to the CFTC, 1919 to 1935

Union	Date of founding
Corporation des employés de soieries de Lyon	1886
Syndicats professionnels féminins de Lyon	1889
Syndicat libre des ouvrières de tissage et de la broderie de Tarare	c. 1900
Union Syndicale des dames employées de la commerce et de l'industrie	1900
Syndicat professionnel de la soie et du textile (Amplepuis)	1911
Union syndicale des employés de la région lyonnaise	1912
Syndicat de la métallurgie et des parties similaires du Rhône	c. 1919
Syndicat du meuble*	c. 1919
Syndicat libre du textile (Thizy)*	1920
Association interprofessionnelle de Givors	1922
Syndicat professionnel des cheminots (Oullins)	1922
Syndicat professionnel des cheminots (Lyon)	1922
CFTC de l'Arsenal	1923
Syndicat libre du bâtiment	1923
Syndicat professionnel des agents et employés PTT	1925
Syndicat professionnel des cheminots (Tarare)	1928
Syndicat professionnel des traminots	1930
Syndicat professionnel du textile (Cours)	1931
Syndicat du textile, teinture et de l'apprêt (l'Arbresle)	1935

* Cited in sources on only one occasion

Appendix four

Methodology

The journals published by conservative parties are a rich source of information. Particularly useful are accounts of the activities of local sections. These normally recorded the names of committee members, attenders of meetings, births, deaths and marriages and various other kinds of information. Sometimes only the family name of the individual is given, but often address and occupation.

Party sections in the agglomeration usually corresponded either to municipal arrondissements in Lyon, or to commune in the suburbs. Outside the agglomeration party organization was loose. But commune of residence of attenders of meetings is nearly always given in the press. It is therefore possible to identify individuals cited in the press in electoral lists.

Electoral registers contain far more information than their British equivalents: besides the full name of the elector, commune and department of birth, date of birth, occupation, and address are recorded. In Lyon, Villeurbanne and Villefranche the polling station at which the individual would vote is also recorded, which permits a fine analysis of social structure.

Once the address of the person has been found, it is then possible to locate the elector on the nominal roll of the five yearly censuses, which are organized alphabetically by street. From these registers we should in theory learn whether an individual was an employer or an employee, his place of work and details of his family.

Armed with the name, address and date of birth of an individual the possibilities are limited only by the time available to the researcher and the state of the archives. It would be possible to use information on birth certificates (such as paternal profession), and perhaps also to discover military records and tax assessments. However, in the present study only two supplementary sources have been used. The *Annuaire de Tout-Lyon* lists the wealthy inhabitants of Lyon, Tarare and Villefranche. It gives addresses of both city and country residences, the maiden name of the spouse, and membership of cercles, as well as information of more dubious historical value such as "at home days". Secondly, the *Indicateurs Lyonnais Henry* and *Indicateurs Fournier*, published annually like the *Tout-Lyon*, are a mine of information on many aspects of society in the Rhône. A considerable proportion of the inhabitants of Lyon and Villeurbanne are listed alphabetically and by street, along with their occupations. The names and addresses of the mayor, tradesmen, industrial establishments, and main landowners are listed for each commune of the department.

From party newspapers, supplemented in a handful of cases by persons mentioned in government reports, a file of over 5,000 militants and sympathizers, representing almost all the parties and leagues of the right, was established, covering the years from 1928 to 1939. Using all the above sources it was possible to identify the professions—the most frequently obtained piece of information—of around 70% of these individuals. It should, however, already be clear that these files do not constitute a representative sample of the Lyonnais right, or of any of its constituent parties. At best it is a collection of party activists, members and sympathizers who turn up in the party press and sometimes police reports. It is therefore essential to identify some of the main sources of bias.

Problems appear at all stages of the process of identification. Some parties did not publish a journal. In such cases the daily press usually filled the gap. The only real problem from this point of view is presented by the *Croix de Feu*, which ceased to publish its internal liaison bulletin in early 1932. Thereafter *Le Flambeau du sud-est*, appeared only seven times in the following three years. Only three of those survive and in any case are singularly uninformative, as are their communications in the daily press. Only a very small sample could be constituted. No such problems exist in the case of the PSF.¹

In the case of the *Fédération républicaine* a problem of a rather different nature occurs: that of whether or not to include certain individuals in the sample. Many persons are cited in the press only because of involvement in the social circles loosely attached to the party.² Although these were important methods of securing a mass following for the party, inclusion of individuals reached through leisure activities must be regarded as over-extending the definition of militant. Had these individuals been included, members of the trades unions organized by the PSF, the SPF, could also have been added. Not only would the inclusion of specialized groups like this bias the sample, but the line has to be drawn somewhere.

Nonetheless, around three out of ten individuals were not located in the electoral list. Causes of non-identification include the fact that bourgeois voters—including Victor Perret—were often registered in the commune in which they possessed a second home. Conversely, some of those who turn up in rural meetings were registered to vote in Lyon.

But the most important problem is insufficiency of information. An activist known only as Durand would be impossible to identify given the presence of numerous homonyms (see Table 27). The more often a person is cited, the more complete the information. The professions of less than 60% of persons active in only

¹ See pp. 423-4.

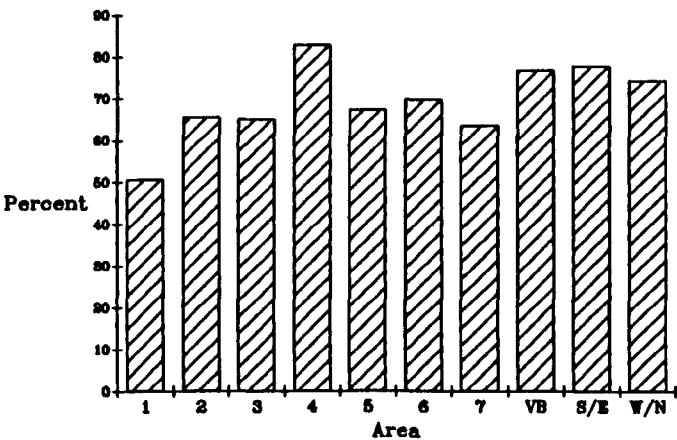
² The *Foyer de Perrache*, *Foyers sociaux de la rive gauche*, or the *Cercle des Travailleurs* of the First arrondissement.

one year were identified; the occupations of all 118 of those active in five or more years are known.

Table 27: Causes of non-identification in electoral lists		
	a	b
2nd arrdt. (PSF)	12	20
5th arrdt. (PSF)	18	15
Villeurbanne (FR)	14	17
Tarare (FR)	9	6
Monts du Lyonnais (FR)	10	5
a = not found due to homonyms. b = not found for other reasons		

Non-identification because of insufficient information weights the sample because of variability on this score between sections. This can be measured by breaking down the sample by area, as in Graph 35.

Graph 35: Percentage of militants identified on electoral list by arrondissement, 1932 to June 1936³



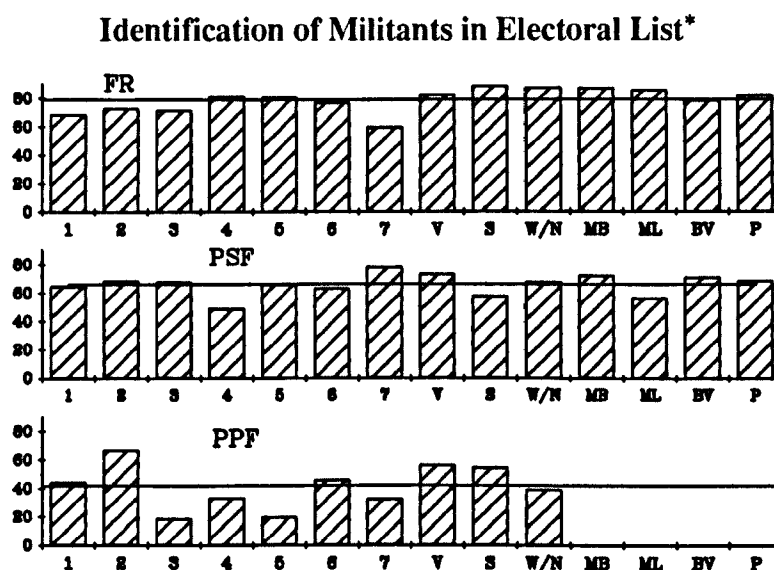
It is noticeable that above average identification levels are a feature of suburban areas, whether in Villeurbanne and other working class suburbs or in the western *banlieu* which comprises both industrial areas like Oullins and bourgeois residential areas like Ste Foy les Lyon. This is the reverse of the situation that would be expected if geographical and social mobility were the chief source of non-location.⁴

3 These years are chosen because of the way in which militants were searched for in electoral lists. All militants active in the years 1932 to 1935 were searched for in the electoral list of 1934. Those active in 1928 to 1931 were searched for in 1931. Those active in 1936 to 1939 were looked for in the lists of 1938.

4 Pinol, *Espace social*, p. 16. For the 6th arrondissement J-L. Pinol located 31% of electors in the census list, but only 48% in St Fons.

Variations in the completeness of information, reflected in geographical differences in levels of identification in electoral lists, are related to types of organization and forms of militancy in the *Fédération Républicaine*, which accounts for the overwhelming majority of individuals in this period. In areas where sections were dominated by notables—chiefly the 1st and 2nd arrondissements, information given in the press was sketchy. In the more activist 4th and in suburban communes, details were far more plentiful. Another reason for the high level of identification in suburban areas is the exaggerated presence of municipal election candidates in the suburban samples.⁵

For the period from 1936 to 1939 it is possible to measure variations in levels of identification both between areas and between parties. Again quality of information is important.⁶ PSF militants are less frequently found than those of the Federation because of a tendency for the former to give only the surnames of those present at meetings. In the case of the PPF the problem of poor quality of information is compounded by a high turnover in membership and by the sketchiness of party organization. Some PPF sections cover more than one arrondissement, so that the chances of finding more than one elector with the same surname are much increased.



Graph 36

Graph 36 shows the mean rate of identification for each party. In the cases of the Federation and the PSF there is not all that much variation in identification rates. The Federation sample confirms the picture shown in Graph 35, with higher rates of

⁵ See pp. 148-9.

⁶ Mean rate of identification for the Federation is 79%. For the PSF it is 66%.

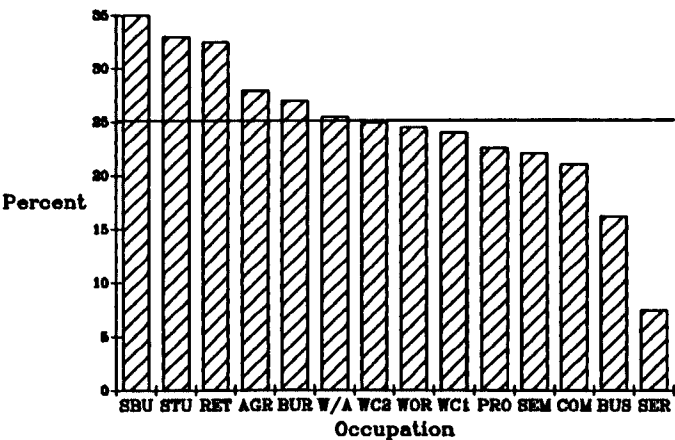
* V = Villeurbanne; S = working class banlieu (Vaulx en Velin, Bron, Vénissieux, St Fons, Oullins, La Muatière, Pierre Benite); W/N = mainly bourgeois residential suburbs (Tassin, Francheville, Ecully, Caluire, St Rambert).

identification in the suburbs and countryside than in Lyon. Within the agglomeration the only major anomaly is the under-identification of militants in the lower middle class and working class 7th arrondissement (60%). This arrondissement made a significant contribution to the Federation. To some extent this must be compensated by the above average identification of militants in other working class areas.

In the case of the PSF the only problems in the agglomeration are a low level of identification in the 4th (48%), and an above average level of 78% in the 7th. Neither of these sections, however, were large. More significant is the low level of identification in the Monts du Lyonnais (56%).

It is the PPF which presents the greatest difficulties, for there is a much greater variability between sections. To generalize, the PPF sample privileges the contribution of militants in bourgeois and proletarian areas, and diminishes recruitment in districts which are socially unsegregated. None of these distortions, however, need stand in the way of analysis.

Graph 37: Occupations of militants found on electoral but not census lists



The second major cause of non-identification in electoral lists is geographical mobility, linked in turn to social mobility. There is obviously no way of discovering the occupational breakdown of those not identified on electoral lists. However, there is reason to believe that it would be similar to the profile of those identified on electoral registers, but not in the census. In his study of the electoral lists and census registers of Lyon, Jean-Luc Pinol shows that non-identification in the census is a function of youth and occupational instability. So young students and unskilled workers are most difficult to find.⁸ Investigation of our own sample shows that the causes of non-identification are basically the same as in the electorate as a whole (see Graph 37). In occupational and generational terms the same groups are more difficult

⁸ Pinol, *op. Espace Social*, pp. 16-20.

to find.⁹ The only major difference is that overall rates of identification are much higher in our sample.¹⁰ This reflects the fact that political militants were more deeply rooted in the agglomeration and the more bourgeois and elderly nature of conservative militants.

Outside of the agglomeration identification levels are high for those involved in agriculture, reflecting the relatively stable nature of rural society. Above average levels of identification are also recorded for those elements of village society which were closest to agriculture—shopkeepers and the category workers or artisans, which includes traditional trades such as blacksmiths and masons. In smaller communes, no doubt, the quasi-totality of electors were registered to vote.

Summing up the exact nature and extent of distortion in the files of conservative militants and sympathizers is impossible. Nonetheless, it is clear that use of electoral and census lists emphasizes the part played by the older, more settled part of the population: bourgeois in Lyon and its suburbs, agricultural and artisanal in the countryside. Probably a more important source of bias is poor quality of source material.

These problems affect the major parties in different ways. In the case of the Federation the general difficulty in locating the young and unskilled is compensated by exaggeration of the importance of suburban electors. But in the case of the PSF it is possible that the importance of the bourgeoisie and elderly is exaggerated.

⁹ The only significant exception is the case of shopkeepers, for whom Jean-Luc Pinol found only average levels of non-identification. This is perhaps a consequence of the multitude of bankruptcies, and consequent geographical mobility, among small shopkeepers in the early 1930s.

¹⁰ Whereas J.-L. Pinol found no more than 65% of a random sample from the electoral lists of 1936, our level of identification was 75%.

Appendix five

Coding of professions

The method used to allocate the 730 occupations recorded in the sources is that elaborated by Jean-Luc Pinol, itself adapted from the system of coding elaborated in the 1960s by INSEE.¹ The occupations given in the sources were first grouped into the fifty basic categories listed below,² and then combined and re-combined according to necessity.

One peculiarity is that if electoral lists alone are used, it is impossible to tell whether those engaged in traditional trades such as shoemaking were employees or artisans. For this reason it was necessary to create a category of “workers or artisans” (25).

Table 28: Flux of coding: businessmen and workers or artisans ³		
	Business (origin)	Worker/artisan (destination)
Businessmen	65	10
Senior Managers	3	0
Shopkeepers	5	3
White Collar	12	7
Artisans	2	31
Workers/Artisans	7	15
Workers	2	27
Others	5	6

The imprecision which results can, however, be greatly reduced by using the supplementary information in censuses and trade directories. Using this information reduces the “worker or artisan” category to negligible proportions. The results of this recoding can be seen in Table 28. Except in cases where direct comparison with Jean-Luc Pinol's study of the electorate was necessary, census and trade directory information has been given precedence over that in the electoral list.

1 *Code des métiers. Index analytique détaillé*, paris, 1968. *Code des catégories socio-professionnelles*, Paris, 1969. J-L. Pinol's *Espace social* contains a table in which over 1,000 appellations are categorized, and a full discussion of his methodology.

2 These are the thirty-nine categories used by J-L Pinol, together with eleven rural categories.

3 Thus, of those coded as businessmen on the electoral list, 65% had been businessmen on the electoral list, 12% had been white collar workers etc. Of those coded as workers or artisans on the electoral list, 10% became businessmen, 3% shopkeepers etc.

Appendix five

Code in fifty categories

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1	Blank	26	Sailors
2	Blank	27	Labourers
3	Industrialists	28	Domestic service
4	Artisans	29	Housewives
5	Fishermen	30	Other services
6	Merchants	31	Artists
7	Small shopkeepers	32	Clergy
8	Liberal professions	33	Army, Police
9	Secondary teachers	34	Students
10	Engineers	35	Retired businessmen
11	Senior Managers	36	Retired (public)
12	Primary teachers	37	Retired (private)
13	Para-medical	38	Other inactive
14	Technicians	39	Others
15	White collar*1	40	Agricultural labour
16	White collar	41	Agriculture*
17	Office workers	42	Agriculture ("patron")
18	Silk white collar	43	Peasant-proprietor
19	Shopworkers	44	Proprietor*
20	PTT white collar	45	Market gardener
21	OTL white collar	46	Tenant
22	PLM white collar	47	Sharecropper
23	Foremen	48	Winegrower
24	Workers	49	"vigneron"
25	Worker or artisan	50	Prop-winegrower

Code in 10 categories⁵

AGR	Agriculture	40-50
BUS	Business	3, 6
SEM	Senior managers	10, 11
PRO	Liberal professions	8, 9
WC1	White collar 1	12-15, 31-33
WC2	White collar 2	16-22
SBU	Small business	4, 5, 7
WOR	Workers	23-28, 30
RET	Retired/inactive	29, 35-39
STU	Students	34

* No other information

⁵ Used in Graphs 13, 18, 26, 30. The eleven category code used in graphs 15, 16 and 31 simply removes workers or artisans from the WOR category. All other graphs are recombinations of these two basic groupings.

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4 Mp Police politique, (prefectoral reports, associations)
7 Mp Agriculture
6 Mp Listes nominatives du recensement
10 Mp Commerce (Chamber of Commerce)
Cour de Justice
3u Archives du parquet de Lyon
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